

THE
CORNHILL MAGAZINE.

DECEMBER 1893.

WITH EDGED TOOLS.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FIRST CONSIGNMENT.

Since all that I can ever do for thee
Is to do nothing, may'st thou never see,
Never divine, the all that nothing costeth me.

ONE morning, three months later, Guy Oscar drew up in line his flying column. He was going back to England with the first consignment of Simiacine. During the twelve weeks that lay behind there had been constant reference made to his little body of picked men, and the leader had selected with a grave deliberation that promised well.

The lost soldier that was in him was all astir in his veins as he reviewed his command in the cool air of early morning. The journey from Msala to the Plateau had occupied a busy two months. Oscar expected to reach Msala with his men in forty days. Piled up in neat square cases, such as could be carried in pairs by a man of ordinary strength, was the crop of Simiacine, roughly valued by Victor Durnovo at forty thousand pounds. Ten men could carry the whole of it, and the twenty cases set close together on the ground made a bed for Guy Oscar. Upon this improvised couch he gravely stretched his bulk every night all through the journey that followed.

Over the whole face of the sparsely vegetated table-land the dwarf bushes grew at intervals, each one in a little circle of its own, where no grass grew; for the dead leaves, falling, poisoned the earth. There were no leaves on the bushes now, for they had

all been denuded, and the twisted branches stood out nakedly in the morning mist. Some of the bushes had been roughly pruned, to foster, if possible, a more bushy growth and a heavier crop of leaves near to the parent stem.

It was a strange landscape; and any passing traveller, knowing nothing of the Simiacine, must perforce have seen at once that these insignificant little trees were something quite apart in the vegetable kingdom. Each standing within its magic circle, no bird built its nest within the branches—no insect constructed its filmy home—no spider weaved its busy web from twig to twig.

Solitary, mournful, lifeless, the Plateau which had nearly cost Victor Durnovo his life lay beneath the face of heaven, far above the surrounding country—the summit of an unnamed mountain—a land lying in the heart of a tropic country which was neither tropic, temperate, nor arctic. Fauna had it none, for it produced nothing that could sustain life. Flora it knew not, for the little trees, each with its perennial fortune of brilliant brown-tinted leaves, monopolised vegetable life and slew all comers. It seemed like some stray tract of another planet, where the condition of living things was different. There was a strange sense of having been thrown up—thrown up, as it were, into mid-heaven, there to hang for ever—neither this world nor the world to come. The silence of it all was such as would drive men mad if they came to think of it. It was the silence of the stars.

The men who had lived up here for three months did not look quite natural. There was a singular heaviness of the eyelids which all had noticed, though none had spoken of it. A craving for animal food, which could only be stayed by the consumption of abnormal quantities of meat, kept the hunters ever at work on the lower slopes of the mountain. Sleep was broken, and uncanny things happened in the night. Men said that they saw other men like trees, walking abroad with sightless eyes; and Joseph said, 'Gammon, my festive darkey—gammon!' but he nevertheless glanced somewhat uneasily towards his master whenever the natives said such things.

A clearing had been made on that part of the Plateau which was most accessible from below. The Simiacine trees had been ruthlessly cut away—even the roots were grubbed up and burnt—far away on the leeward side of the little kingdom. This was done because there arose at sunset a soft and pleasant odour from the bushes which seemed to affect the nerves and even made the teeth

chatter. It was therefore deemed wise that the camp should stand on bare ground.

It was on this ground, in front of the tents, that Guy Osgard drew up his quick-marching column before the sun had sprung up in its fantastic tropical way from the distant line of virgin forest. As he walked along the line, making a suggestion here, pulling on a shoulder-rope there, he looked staunch and strong as any man might wish to be. His face was burnt so brown that eyebrows and moustache stood out almost blonde, though in reality they were only brown. His eyes did not seem to be suffering from the heaviness noticeable in others; altogether, the climate and the mystic breath of the Simiacine grove did not appear to affect him as it did his companions. This was probably accounted for by the fact that, being chief of the hunters, most of his days had been passed on the lower slopes in search of game.

To him came presently Jack Meredith—the same gentlemanly man, with an incongruously brown face and quick eyes seeing all. It is not, after all, the life that makes the man. There are gentle backwoodsmen, and ruffians among those who live in drawing-rooms.

‘Well?’ said Meredith, following the glance of his friend’s eye as he surveyed his men.

Osgard took his pipe from his lips and looked gravely at him.

‘Don’t half like it, you know,’ he said in a low voice; for Durnovo was talking with a head porter a few yards away.

‘Don’t half like what?—the flavour of that pipe? It looks a little strong.’

‘No, leaving you here,’ replied Osgard.

‘Oh, that’s all right, old chap! You can’t take me with you, you know. I intended to stick to it when I came away from home, and I am not going to turn back now.’

Osgard gave a queer little upward jerk of the head, as if he had just collected further evidence in support of a theory which chronically surprised him. Then he turned away and looked down over the vast untrodden tract of Africa that lay beneath them. He kept his eyes fixed there, after the manner of a man who has no fluency in personal comment.

‘You know,’ he said jerkily, ‘I didn’t think—I mean you’re not the sort of chap I took you for. When I first saw you I thought you were a bit of a dandy and—all that. Not the sort

of man for this work. I thought that the thing was bound to be a failure. I knew Durnovo, and had no faith in him. You've got a gentle way about you, and your clothes are so confoundingly neat. But——' Here he paused and pulled down the folds of his Norfolk jacket. 'But I liked the way you shot that leopard the day we first met.'

'Beastly fluke,' put in Meredith, with his pleasant laugh.

Oscard contented himself with a denying shake of the head.

'Of course,' he continued, with obvious determination to get it all off his mind, 'I know as well as you do that you are the chief of this concern—have been chief since we left Msala—and I never want to work under a better man.'

He put his pipe back between his lips and turned round with a contented smile, as much as to say, 'There, that is the sort of man I am! When I want to say that sort of thing I can say it with the best of you.'

'We have pulled along very comfortably, haven't we?' said Meredith; 'thanks to your angelic temper. And you'll deliver that packet of letters to the governor, won't you? I have sent them in one packet, addressed to him, as it is easier to carry. I will let you hear of us somehow within the next six months. Do not go and get married before I get home. I want to be your best man.'

Oscard laughed and gave the signal for the men to start and the long caravan defiled before them. The porters nodded to Meredith with a great display of white teeth, while the head men, the captains of tens, stepped out of the ranks and shook hands.

Before they had disappeared over the edge of the plateau Joseph came forward to say good-bye to Oscard.

'And it is understood,' said the latter, 'that I pay in to your account at Lloyd's Bank your share of the proceeds.'

Joseph grinned. 'Yes, sir, if you please, presumin' it's a safe bank.'

'Safe as houses.'

'Cos it's a tolerable big amount,' settling himself into his boots in the manner of a millionaire.

'Lot of money—about four hundred pounds! But you can trust me to see to it all right.'

'No fear, sir,' replied Joseph grandly. 'I'm quite content, I'm sure, that you should have the—fingering o' the dibs.'

As he finished—somewhat lamely perhaps—his rounded periods, he looked very deliberately over Oscar's shoulder towards Durnovo, who was approaching them.

Meredith walked a little way down the slope with Oscar.

'Good-bye, old chap!' he said when the parting came. 'Good luck, and all that. Hope you will find all right at home. By the way,' he shouted after him, 'give my kind regards to the Gordons at Loango.'

And so the first consignment of Simiacine was sent from the Plateau to the Coast.

Guy Oscar was one of those deceptive men who only do a few things, and do those few very well. In forty-three days he deposited the twenty precious cases in Gordon's godowns at Loango, and paid off the porters, of whom he had not lost one. These duties performed, he turned his steps towards the bungalow. He had refused Gordon's invitation to stay with him until the next day, when the coasting steamer was expected. To tell the truth, he was not very much prepossessed in Maurice's favour, and it was with a doubtful mind that he turned his steps towards the little house in the forest between Loango and the sea.

The room was the first surprise that awaited him, its youthful mistress the second. Guy Oscar was rather afraid of most women. He did not understand them, and probably he despised them. Men who are afraid or ignorant often do.

'And when did you leave them?' asked Jocelyn, after her visitor had explained who he was. He was rather taken aback by so much dainty refinement in remote Africa, and explained rather badly. But she helped him out by intimating that she knew all about him.

'I left them forty-four days ago,' he replied.

'And were they well?'

'She is very much interested,' reflected Oscar, upon whom her eagerness of manner had not been lost. 'Surely, it cannot be that fellow Durnovo?'

'Oh, yes,' he replied with unconscious curtness.

'Mr. Durnovo cannot ever remain inland for long without feeling the effect of the climate.'

Guy Oscar, with the perspicacity of his sex, gobbled up the bait. 'It is Durnovo,' he reflected.

'Oh, he is all right,' he said; 'wonderfully well, and so are the others—Joseph and Meredith. You know Meredith?'

Jocelyn was busy with a vase of flowers standing on the table at her elbow. One of the flowers had fallen half out, and she was replacing it—very carefully.

‘Oh, yes,’ she said, without ceasing her occupation, ‘we know Mr. Meredith.’

The visitor did not speak at once, and she looked up at him, over the flowers, with grave politeness.

‘Meredith,’ he said, ‘is one of the most remarkable men I have ever met.’

It was evident that this ordinarily taciturn man wanted to unburthen his mind. He was desirous of talking to someone of Jack Meredith; and perhaps Jocelyn reflected that she was as good a listener as he would find in Loango.

‘Really,’ she replied with a kindly interest. ‘How?’

He paused, not because he found it difficult to talk to this woman, but because he was thinking of something.

‘I have read or heard somewhere of a steel gauntlet beneath a velvet glove.’

‘Yes.’

‘That describes Meredith. He is not the man I took him for. He is so wonderfully polite and gentle and pleasant. Not the qualities that make a good leader for an African exploring expedition—eh?’

Jocelyn gave a strange little laugh, which included, among other things, a subtle intimation that she rather liked Guy Oscar. Women do convey these small meanings sometimes, but one finds that they do not intend them to be acted upon.

‘And he has kept well all the time?’ she asked softly. ‘He did not look strong.’

‘Oh, yes. He is much stronger than he looks.’

‘And you—you have been all right?’

‘Yes, thanks.’

‘Are you going back to—them?’

‘No, I leave to-morrow morning early by the Portuguese boat. I am going home to be married.’

‘Indeed! Then I suppose you will wash your hands of Africa for ever?’

‘Not quite,’ he replied. ‘I told Meredith that I would be prepared to go up to him in case of emergency, but not otherwise. I shall, of course, still be interested in the scheme. I take home the first consignment of Simiacine; we have been very successful,

you know. I shall have to stay in London to sell that. I have a house there.'

'Are you to be married at once?' inquired Jocelyn, with that frank interest which makes it so much easier for a man to talk of his own affairs to a woman than to one of his own sex.

'As soon as I can arrange it,' he answered with a little laugh. 'There is nothing to wait for. We are both orphans, and, fortunately, we are fairly well off.'

He was fumbling in his breast-pocket, and presently he rose, crossed the room, and handed her, quite without afterthought or self-consciousness, a photograph in a morocco case.

Explanation was unnecessary, and Jocelyn Gordon looked smilingly upon a smiling, bright young face.

'She is very pretty,' she said honestly.

Whereupon Guy Oscar grunted unintelligibly.

'Millicent,' he said after a little pause, 'Millicent is her name.'

'Millicent!' repeated Jocelyn—'Millicent *what*?'

'Millicent Chyne.'

Jocelyn folded the morocco case together and handed it back to him.

'She is very pretty,' she repeated slowly, as if her mind could only reproduce—it was incapable of creation.

Oscar looked puzzled. Having risen he did not sit down again, and presently he took his leave, feeling convinced that Jocelyn was about to faint.

When he was gone the girl sat wearily down.

'Millicent Chyne,' she whispered. 'What is to be done?'

'Nothing,' she answered to herself after a while. 'Nothing. It is not my business. I can do nothing.'

She sat there—alone, as she had been all her life—until the short tropical twilight fell over the forest. Quite suddenly she burst into tears.

'It *is* my business,' she sobbed. 'It is no good pretending otherwise; but I can do nothing.'

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SECOND CONSIGNMENT.

Who has lost all hope has also lost all fear.

AMONG others, it was a strange thing that Jocelyn felt no surprise at meeting the name of Millicent Chyne on the lips of another man. Women understand these things better than we do. They understand each other, and they seem to have a practical way of accepting human nature as it is which we never learn to apply to our fellow-men. They never bluster as we do, nor expect impossibilities from the frail.

Another somewhat singular residue left, as it were, in Jocelyn's mind when the storm of emotion had subsided was a certain indefinite tenderness for Millicent Chyne. She felt sure that Jack Meredith's feeling for her was that feeling vaguely called the right one, and, as such, unalterable. To this knowledge the subtle sympathy for Millicent was perhaps attributable. But navigation with pen and thought among the shoals and depths of a woman's heart is hazardous and uncertain.

Coupled with this—as only a woman could couple contradictions—was an unpardoning abhorrence for the deceit practised. But Jocelyn knew the world well enough to suspect that, if she were ever brought face to face with her meanness, Millicent would be able to bring about her own forgiveness. It is the knowledge of this lamentable fact that undermines the feminine sense of honour.

Lastly, there was a calm acceptance of the fact that Guy Osgard must and would inevitably go to the wall. There could be no comparison between the two men. Millicent Chyne could scarcely hesitate for a moment. That she herself must likewise suffer uncomplainingly, inevitably, seemed to be an equally natural consequence in Jocelyn Gordon's mind.

She could not go to Jack Meredith and say :

'This woman is deceiving you, but I love you, and my love is a nobler, grander thing than hers. It is no passing fancy of a giddy, dazzled girl, but the deep strong passion of a woman almost in the middle of her life. It is a love so complete, so sufficing, that I know I could make you forget this girl. I could so envelope you with love, so watch over you and care for you, and tend you and

understand you, that you *must* be happy. I feel that I could make you happier than any other woman in the world could make you.'

Jocelyn Gordon could not do this ; and all the advanced females in the world, all the blue stockings and divided skirts, all the wild women and those who pant for burdens other than children will never bring it to pass that women can say such things.

And precisely because she could not say this Jocelyn felt hot and sick at the very thought that Jack Meredith should learn aught of Millicent Chyne from her. Her own inner motive in divulging what she had learnt from Guy Oscard could never for a moment be hidden behind a wish, however sincere, to act for the happiness of two honourable gentlemen.

Jocelyn had no one to consult—no one to whom she could turn, in the maddening difficulty of her position, for advice or sympathy. She had to work it out by herself, steering through the quicksands by that compass that knows no deviation—the compass of her own honour and maidenly reserve.

Just because she was so sure of her own love she felt that she could never betray the falseness of Millicent Chyne. She felt somehow that Millicent's fall in Jack Meredith's estimation would drag down with it the whole of her sex, and consequently herself. She did not dare to betray Millicent, because the honour of her sex must be held up by an exaggerated honour in herself. Thus her love for Jack Meredith tied her hands while she stood idly by to see him wreck his own life by what could only be a miserable union.

With the clear sight of the onlooker Jocelyn Gordon now saw that, by Jack Meredith's own showing, Millicent was quite unworthy of him. But she also remembered words, silences, and hints which demonstrated with lamentable plainness the fact that he loved her. She was old enough and sufficiently experienced to avoid the futile speculation as to what had attracted this love. She knew that men marry women who in the estimation of on-looking relatives are unworthy of them, and live happily ever afterwards without deeming it necessary to explain to those relatives how it comes about.

Now it happened that this woman—Jocelyn Gordon—was not one of those who gracefully betray themselves at the right moment and are immediately covered with a most becoming confusion. She was strong to hold to her purpose, to subdue herself, to keep

silent. And this task she set herself, having thought it all carefully out in the little flower-scented verandah, so full of pathetic association. But it must be remembered that she in no wise seemed to see the pathos in her own life. She was unconscious of romance. It was all plain fact, and the plainest was her love for Jack Meredith.

Her daily life was in no perceptible way changed. Maurice Gordon saw no difference. She had never been an hilarious person. Now she went about her household, her kindnesses, and unobtrusive good works with a quieter mien; but, when occasion or social duty demanded, she seemed perhaps a little readier than before to talk of indifferent topics, to laugh at indifferent wit. Those who have ears to hear and eyes wherewith to see learn to distrust the laugh that is too ready, the sympathy that flows in too broad a stream. Happiness is self-absorbed.

Four months elapsed, and the excitement created in the small world of Western Africa by the first dazzling success of the Simiacine Expedition began to subside. The thing took its usual course. At first the experts disbelieved, and then they prophesied that it could not last. Finally, the active period of envy, hatred, and malice gave way to a sullen tolerance not unmixed with an indefinite grudge towards Fortune who had favoured the brave once more.

Maurice Gordon was in daily expectation of news from that far-off favoured spot they vaguely called the Plateau. And Jocelyn did not pretend to conceal from herself the hope that filled her whole being—the hope that Jack Meredith might bring the news in person.

Instead, came Victor Durnovo.

He came upon her one evening when she was walking slowly home from a mild tea-party at the house of a missionary. Hearing footsteps on the sandy soil, she turned, and found herself face to face with Durnovo.

'Ah!' she exclaimed, and her voice thrilled with some emotion which he did not understand. 'Ah, it is you.'

'Yes,' he said, holding her hand a little longer than was necessary. 'It is I.'

His journey from Msala through the more civilised reaches of the lower river, his voyage in the coasting boat, and his arrival at Loango, had partaken of the nature of a triumphal progress. Victor Durnovo was elated—like a girl in a new dress.

'I was coming along to see you,' he said, and there was a subtle offence in his tone.

She did not trouble to tell him that Maurice was away for ten days. She felt that he knew that. There was a certain truculence in his walk which annoyed her; but she was wonderingly conscious of the fact that she was no longer afraid of him. This feeling had as yet taken no definite shape. She did not know what she felt, but she knew that there was no fear in her mind.

'Have you been successful?' she asked, with a certain negative kindness of tone bred of this new self-confidence.

'I should think we had. Why, the lot that Oscar brought down was a fortune in itself. But you saw Oscar, of course. Did he stay at the bungalow?'

'No; he stayed at the hotel.'

'Did you like him?'

The question was accompanied by a momentary glance of the dark, jealous eyes.

'Yes, very much.'

'He is a nice fellow, first-rate fellow. Of course, he has his faults, but he and I got on splendidly. He's—engaged, you know.'

'So he told me.'

Durnovo glanced at her again searchingly, and looked relieved. He gave an awkward little laugh.

'And I understand,' he said, 'that Meredith is in the same enviable position.'

'Indeed!'

Durnovo indulged in a meaning silence.

'When do you go back?' she asked carelessly.

'Almost at once,' in a tone that apologised for causing her necessary pain. 'I must leave to-morrow or the next day. I do not like the idea of Meredith being left too long alone up there with a reduced number of men. Of course, I had to bring a pretty large escort. I brought down sixty thousand pounds worth of Simiacine.'

'Yes,' she said; 'and you take all the men back to-morrow?'

He did not remember having stated for certain that he was leaving the next day.

'Or the day after,' he amended.

'Have you had any more sickness among the men?' she asked at once, in a tone of half-veiled sarcasm which made him wince.

'No,' he answered, 'they have been quite all right.'

'What time do you start?' she asked. 'There are letters for Mr. Meredith at the office. Maurice's head clerk will give them to you.'

She knew that these letters were from Millicent. She had actually had them in her hand. She had inhaled the faint, refined scent of the paper and envelopes.

'You will be careful that they are not lost, won't you?' she said, tearing at her own heart with a strange love of the pain. 'They may be important.'

'Oh, I will deliver them sharp enough,' he answered. 'I suppose I had better start to-morrow.'

'I should think so,' she replied quietly, with that gentle mendacity which can scarcely be grudged to women because they are so poorly armed. 'I should think so. You know what these men are. Every hour they have in Loango demoralises them more and more.'

They had reached the gate of the bungalow garden. She turned and held out her hand in an undeniable manner. He bade her good-bye and went his way, wondering vaguely what had happened to them both. The conversation had taken quite a different turn to what he had expected and intended. But somehow it had got beyond his control. He had looked forward to a very different ending to the interview. And now he found himself returning somewhat disconsolately to the wretched hotel in Loango—dismissed—sent back.

The next day he actually left the little West African Coast town, turning his face northward with bad grace. Even at that distance he feared Jack Meredith's half-veiled sarcasm. He knew that nothing could be hidden for long from the Englishman's suavely persistent inquiry and deduction. Besides, the natives were no longer safe. Meredith, with the quickness of a cultured linguist, had picked up enough of their language to understand them, while Joseph talked freely with them in that singular mixture of slang and vernacular which follows the redcoat all over the world. Durnovo had only been allowed to come down to the coast under a promise, gracefully veiled but distinct enough, that he should only remain twenty-four hours in Loango.

Jocelyn avoided seeing him again. She was forced to forego the opportunity of hearing much that she wanted to learn because Durnovo, the source of the desired knowledge, was unsafe. But

the relief from the suspense of the last few months was in itself a consolation. All seemed to be going on well at the Plateau. Danger is always discounted at sight, and Jocelyn felt comparatively easy respecting the present welfare of Jack Meredith, living as she did on the edge of danger.

Four days later she was riding through the native town of Loango, accompanied by a lady-friend, when she met Victor Durnovo. The sight of him gave her a distinct shock. She knew that he had left Loango three days before with all his men. There was no doubt about that. Moreover, his air was distinctly furtive—almost scared. It was evident that the chance meeting was as undesired by him as it was surprising to her.

‘I thought you had left,’ she said shortly, pulling up her horse with undeniable decision.

‘Yes . . . but I have come back—for, for more men.’

She knew he was lying, and he felt that she knew.

‘Indeed!’ she said. ‘You are not . . . a good starter.’

She turned her horse’s head, nodded to her friend, bowed coldly to Durnovo, and trotted towards home. When she had reached the corner of the rambling ill-paved street she touched her horse. The animal responded. She broke into a gentle canter, which made the little children cease their play and stare. In the forest she applied the spur, and beneath the whispering trees, over the silent sand, the girl galloped home as fast as her horse could lay legs to ground.

Jocelyn Gordon was one of those women who rise slowly to the occasion, and the limit of their power seems at times to be only defined by the greatness of the need.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MERCURY.

So cowards never use their might
But against such that will not fight.

ON nearing the bungalow Jocelyn turned aside into the forest where a little colony of huts nestled in a hollow of the sand-dunes.

‘Nâla,’ she cried, ‘the paddle-maker. Ask him to come to me.’

She spoke in the dialect of the coast to some women who sat together before one of the huts.

'Nâla—yes,' they answered. And they raised their strident voices.

In a few moments a man emerged from a shed of banana-leaves. He was a scraggy man—very lightly clad—and a violent squint handicapped him seriously in the matter of first impressions. When he saw Jocelyn he dropped his burden of wood and ran towards her. The African negro does not cringe. He is a proud man in his way. If he is properly handled he is not only trustworthy—he is something stronger. Nâla grinned as he ran towards Jocelyn.

'Nâla,' she said, 'will you go a journey for me?'

'I will go at once.'

'I came to you,' said Jocelyn, 'because I know that you are an intelligent man and a great traveller.'

'I have travelled much,' he answered, 'when I was younger.'

'Before you were married?' said the English girl. 'Before little Nâla came?'

The man grinned.

He looked back over his shoulder towards one of the huts where a scraggy infant with a violent squint lay on its diaphragm on the sand.

'Where do you wish me to go?' asked the proud father.

'To Msala on the Ogowe river.'

'I know the Ogowe. I have been at Msala,' with the grave nod of a great traveller.

'When can you leave?'

He shrugged his shoulders.

'Now.'

Jocelyn had her purse in her hand.

'You can hire a dhow,' she said; 'and on the river you may have as many rowers as you like. You must go very quickly to Msala. There you must ask about the Englishman's Expedition. You have heard of it?'

'Yes: the Englishman Durnovo, and the soldier who laughs.'

'Yes. Some of the men are at Msala now. They were going up-country to join the other Englishman far away—near the mountains. They have stopped at Msala. Find out why they have not gone on, and come back very quickly to tell me. You understand, Nâla?'

'Yes.'

'And I can trust you?'

'Yes : because you cured the little one when he had an evil spirit. Yes, you can trust me.'

She gave him money and rode on home. Before she reached the bungalow the paddle-maker passed her at a trot, going towards the sea.

She waited for three days, and then Victor Durnovo came again. Maurice was still away. There was an awful sense of impending danger in the very air—in the loneliness of her position. Yet she was not afraid of Durnovo. She had left that fear behind. She went to the drawing-room to see him, full of resolution.

'I could not go away,' he said, after relinquishing her hand, 'without coming to see you.'

Jocelyn said nothing. The scared look which she had last seen in his face was no longer there ; but the eyes were full of lies.

'Jocelyn,' the man went on, 'I suppose you know that I love you ? It must have been plain to you for a long time.'

'No,' she answered with a little catch in her breath. 'No, it has not. And I am sorry to hear it now.'

'Why ?' he asked, with a dull gleam which could not be dignified by the name of love.

'Because it can only lead to trouble.'

Victor Durnovo was standing with his back to the window, while Jocelyn, in the full light of the afternoon, stood before him. He looked her slowly up and down with a glance of approval which alarmed and disquieted her.

'Will you marry me ?' he asked.

'No !'

His black moustache was pushed forward by some motion of the hidden lips.

'Why ?'

'Do you want the real reason ?' asked Jocelyn.

Victor Durnovo paused for a moment.

'Yes,' he said.

'Because I not only do not care for you, but I despise and distrust you.'

'You are candid,' he said, with an unpleasant little laugh.

'Yes.'

He moved a little to one side and drew a chair towards him, half-leaning, half-sitting on the back of it.

'Then,' he said, 'I will be candid with you. I intend you to marry me ; I have intended it for a long time. I am not going

down on my knees to ask you to do it : that is not my way. But, if you drive me to it, I will make your brother Maurice go down on his knees and beg you to marry me.'

'I don't think you will do that,' answered the girl steadily. 'Whatever your power over Maurice may be, it is not strong enough for that ; you overrate it.'

'You think so ?' he sneered.

'I am sure of it.'

Durnovo glanced hastily round the room in order to make sure that they were not overheard.

'Suppose,' he said, in a low, hissing voice, 'that I possess knowledge that I have only to mention to one or two people to make this place too hot for Maurice Gordon. If he escaped the fury of the natives, it would be difficult to know where he could go. England would be too hot for him. They wouldn't have him there ; I could see to that. He would be a ruined man—an outcast—execrated by all the civilised world.'

He was watching her face all the while. He saw the colour leave even her lips, but they were steady and firm. A strange wonder crept into his heart. This woman never flinched. There was some reserved strength within herself upon which she was now drawing. His dealings had all been with half-castes—with impure blood and doubtful descendants of a mixed ancestry. He had never fairly roused a pure-bred English man or woman, and suddenly he began to feel out of his depth.

'What is your knowledge ?' asked Jocelyn in a coldly measured voice.

'I think you had better not ask that ; you will be sorry afterwards. I would rather that you thought quietly over what I have told you. Perhaps, on second thoughts, you will see your way to give me some—slight hope. I should really advise it.'

'I did not ask your advice. What is your knowledge ?'

'You will have it ?' he hissed.

'Yes.'

He leant forward, craning his neck, pushing his yellow face and hungering black eyes close into hers.

'Then, if you will have it, your brother—Maurice Gordon—is a slave-owner.'

She drew back as she might have done from some unclean animal. She knew that he was telling the truth. There might be extenuating circumstances. The real truth might have quite

a different sound, spoken in different words; but there was enough of the truth in it, as Victor Durnovo placed it before her, to condemn Maurice before the world.

'Now will you marry me?' he sneered.

'No!'

Quick as thought she had seen the only loop-hole—the only possible way of meeting this terrible accusation.

He laughed; but there was a faint jangle of uneasiness in his laughter.

'Indeed!'

'Supposing,' said Jocelyn, 'for one moment that there was a grain of truth in your fabrication, who would believe you? Who on this coast would take your word against the word of an English gentleman? Even if the whole story were true, which it is not, could you prove it? You are a liar, as well as a coward and a traitor! Do you think that the very servants in the stable would believe you? Do you think that the incident of the small-pox at Msala is forgotten? Do you think that all Loango, even to the boatmen on the beach, ignores the fact that you are here in Loango now because you are afraid to go through a savage country to the Simiacine Plateau as you are pledged to do? You were afraid of the small-pox once; there is something else that you are afraid of now. I do not know what it is, but I will find out. Coward! Go! Leave the house at once, before I call in the stable boys to turn you out, and never dare to speak to me again!'

Victor Durnovo recoiled before her, conscious all the while that she had never been so beautiful as at that moment. But she was something far above him—a different creation altogether. He never knew what drove him from that room. It was the fear of something that he did not understand.

He heard her close the window after him as he walked away beneath the trees.

She stood watching him—proud, cold, terrible in her womanly anger. Then she turned, and suddenly sank down upon the sofa, sobbing.

But fortune decreed that she should have neither time to weep nor think. She heard the approaching footsteps of her old servant, and when the door was opened Jocelyn Gordon was reading a book, with her back turned towards the window.

'That man Nâla, miss, the paddle-maker, wants to see you.'

‘Tell him to go round to the verandah.’

Jocelyn went out by the open window, and presently Nâla came grinning towards her. He was evidently very much pleased with himself—held himself erect, and squinted more violently than usual.

‘I have been to Msala,’ he said with considerable dignity of manner.

‘Yes, and what news have you?’

Nâla squatted down on the chunam floor, and proceeded to unfold a leaf. The operation took some time. Within the outer covering there was a second envelope of paper, likewise secured by a string. Finally, the man produced a small note, which showed signs of having been read more than once. This he handed to Jocelyn with an absurd air of importance.

She opened the paper and read:—

‘TO MARIE AT MSALA,—Send at once to Mr. Durnovo, informing him that the tribes have risen and are rapidly surrounding the Plateau. He must return here at once with as large an armed force as he can raise. But the most important consideration is time. He must not wait for men from elsewhere, but must pick up as many as he can in Loando and on the way up to Msala. I reckon that we can hold out for three months without outside assistance, but after that period we shall be forced to surrender or to try and cut our way through *without* the Simiacine. With a larger force we could beat back the tribes, and establish our hold on the Plateau by force of arms. This must be forwarded to Mr. Durnovo at once, wherever he is. The letter is in duplicate, sent by two good messengers, who go by different routes.

‘JOHN MEREDITH.’

When Jocelyn looked up, dry-lipped, breathless, Nâla was standing before her, beaming with self-importance.

‘Who gave you this?’

‘Marie, at Msala.’

‘Who is she?’

‘Oh—Mr. Durnovo’s woman at Msala. She keeps his house.’

‘But this letter is for Mr. Durnovo,’ cried Jocelyn, whose fear made her unreasonably angry. ‘Why has he not had it?’

Nâla came nearer with upraised forefinger and explanatory palm.

‘Marie tell me,’ he said, ‘that Mr. Meredith send two letters. Marie give Mr. Durnovo one. This—other letter.’

There was a strange glitter in the girl's blue eyes—something steely and unpleasant.

'You are sure of that? You are quite sure that Mr. Durnovo has had a letter like this?' she asked slowly and carefully, so that there could be no mistake.

'That is true,' answered the man.

'Have you any more news from Msala?'

Nâla looked slightly hurt. He evidently thought that he had brought as much news as one man could be expected to carry.

'Marie has heard,' he said, 'that there is much fighting up in the country.'

'She has heard no particulars—nothing more than that?'

'No: nothing.'

Jocelyn Gordon rose to this occasion also.

'Can you go,' she said, after a moment's thought, 'to St. Paul de Loanda for me?'

The man laughed.

'Yes,' he answered simply.

'At once—now?'

'Oh, yes,' with a sigh.

Already Jocelyn was writing something on a sheet of paper.

'Take this,' she said, 'to the telegraph office at St. Paul de Loanda, and send it off at once. Here is money. You understand? I will pay you when you bring back the receipt. If you have been very quick, I will pay you well.'

That same evening a second messenger started northward after Maurice Gordon with a letter telling him to come back at once to Loango.

CHAPTER XXIV.

NEMESIS.

'Take heed of still waters.'

DESPITE his assertion to Lady Cantourne, Guy Oscard stayed on in the gloomy house in Russell Square. He had naturally gone thither on his return from Africa, and during the months that followed he did not find time to think much of his own affairs. Millicent Chyne occupied all his thoughts—all his waking moments. It is marvellous how busily an active-minded young lady can keep a man employed.

In the ill-lighted study rendered famous by the great history which had emanated in the manuscript therefrom, Guy Osgard had interviewed sundry great commercial experts, and a cheque for forty-eight thousand pounds had been handed to him across the table polished bright by his father's studious elbow. The Simiacine was sold, and the first portion of it spent went to buy a diamond aigrette for the dainty head of Miss Millicent Chyne.

Guy Osgard was in the midst of the London season. His wealth and a certain restricted renown had soon made him popular. He had only to choose his society, and the selection was not difficult. Wherever Millicent Chyne went, he went also, and to the lady's credit it must be recorded that no one beyond herself and Guy Osgard had hitherto noticed this fact. Millicent was nothing if not discreet. It was more or less generally known that she was engaged to Jack Meredith, who, although absent on some vaguely romantic quest of a fortune, was not yet forgotten. No word, however, was popularly whispered connecting her name with that of any other swain nearer home. Miss Chyne was too much of a woman of the world to allow that. But, in the meantime, she rather liked diamond aigrettes and the suppressed devotion of Guy Osgard.

It was the evening of a great ball, and Guy Osgard, having received his orders and instructions, was dining alone in Russell Square, when a telegram was handed to him. He opened it and spread the thin paper out upon the table-cloth. A word from that far wild country, which seemed so much fitter a background to his simple bulk and strength than the cramped ways of London society—a message from the very heart of the dark continent—to him :

‘Meredith surrounded and in danger Durnovo false come at once Jocelyn Gordon.’

Guy Osgard pushed back his chair and rose at once, as if there were somebody waiting in the hall to see him.

‘I do not want any more dinner,’ he said. ‘I am going to Africa. Come and help me to pack my things.’

He studied Bradshaw and wrote a note to Millicent Chyne. To her he said the same as he had said to the butler, ‘I am going to Africa.’

There was something refreshingly direct and simple about this man. He did not enter into long explanations. He simply bore

on in the line he had marked out. He rose from the table and never looked back. His attitude seemed to say, 'I am going to Africa: kindly get out of my way.'

At three minutes to nine—that is to say, in one hour and a half—Guy Oscar took his seat in the Plymouth express. He had ascertained that a Madeira boat was timed to sail from Dartmouth at eight o'clock that evening. He was preceded by a telegram to Lloyd's agent at Plymouth:

'Have fastest craft available, steam up ready to put to sea to catch the Banyan African steamer four o'clock to-morrow morning. Expense not to be considered.'

As the train crept out into the night the butler of the gloomy house in Russell Square, who had finished the port, and was beginning to feel resigned, received a second shock. This came in the form of a carriage and pair, followed by a ring at the bell.

The man opened the door, and his fellow servitor of an eccentric class and generation stepped back on the doorstep to let a young lady pass into the hall.

'Mr. Oscar?' she said curtly.

'Left 'ome, miss,' replied the butler, stiffly conscious of walnut-peel on his waistcoat.

'How long ago?'

'A matter of half an hour, miss.'

Millicent Chyne, whose face was drawn and white, passed farther into the hall. Seeing the dining-room door ajar, she passed into that stately apartment, followed by the butler.

'Mr. Oscar sent me this note,' she said, showing a crumpled paper, 'saying that he was leaving for Africa to-night. He gives no explanation. Why has he gone to Africa?'

'He received a telegram while he was at dinner, miss,' replied the butler, whose knowledge of the world indicated the approach of at least a sovereign. 'He rose and threw down his napkin, miss. "I'm goin' to Africa," he says. "Come and help me pack."'

'Did you see the telegram—by any chance?' asked Miss Chyne.

'Well, miss, I didn't rightly read it.'

Millicent had given way to a sudden panic on the receipt of Guy's note. A telegram calling him to Africa—calling with a voice which he obeyed with such alacrity that he had not paused to finish his dinner—could only mean that some disaster had happened—some disaster to Jack Meredith. And quite suddenly

Millicent Chyne's world was emptied of all else but Jack Meredith. For a moment she forgot herself. She ran to the room where Lady Cantourne was affixing the family jewelry on her dress, and, showing the letter, said breathlessly that she must see Guy Osgard at once. Lady Cantourne, wise woman of the world that she was, said nothing. She merely finished her toilet, and, when the carriage was ready, they drove round by Russell Square.

'Who was it from?' asked Millicent.

'From a person named Gordon, miss.'

'And what did it say?'

'Well, miss, as I said before, I did not rightly see. But it seems that it said, "Come at once." I saw that.'

'And what else? Be quick, please.'

'I think there was mention of somebody bein' surrounded, miss. Some name like Denver, I think. No! Wait a bit: it wasn't that; it was somebody else.'

Finishing off the port had also meant beginning it, and the worthy butler's mind was not particularly clear.

'Was there any mention of Mr. Osgard's partner, Mr.—eh—Meredith?' asked Millicent, glancing at the clock.

'Yes, miss, there was that name, but I don't rightly remember in what connection.'

'It didn't say that he——' Millicent paused and drew in her breath with a jerk—'was dead, or anything like that?'

'Oh, no, miss.'

'Thank you. I—am sorry we missed Mr. Osgard.'

She turned and went back to Lady Cantourne, who was sitting in the carriage. And while she was dancing the second extra with the first comer at four o'clock the next morning, Guy Osgard was racing out of Plymouth Sound into the teeth of a fine, driving rain. On the bridge of the trembling tug-boat, by Osgard's side, stood a keen-eyed Channel pilot, who knew the tracks of the steamers up and down Channel as a gamekeeper knows the hare-tracks across a stubble-field. Moreover, the tug-boat caught the big steamer pounding down into the grey of the Atlantic Ocean, and in due time Guy Osgard landed on the beach at Loanda.

He had the telegram still in his pocket, and he went, not to Maurice Gordon's office, but to the bungalow.

Jocelyn greeted him with a little inarticulate cry of joy.

'I did not think that you could possibly be here so soon,' she said.

'What news have you?' he asked, without pausing to explain. He was one of those men who are silenced by an unlimited capacity for prompt action.

'That,' she replied, handing him the note written by Jack Meredith to Marie at Msala.

Guy Oscar read it carefully.

'Dated seven weeks last Monday—nearly two months ago,' he muttered, half to himself.

He raised his head and looked out of the window. There were lines of anxiety round his eyes. Jocelyn never took her glance from his face.

'Nearly two months ago,' he repeated.

'But you will go?' she said—and something in her voice startled him.

'Of course I will go,' he replied. He looked down into her face with a vague question in his quiet eyes; and who knows what he saw there? Perhaps she was off her guard. Perhaps she read this man aright and did not care.

With a certain slow hesitation he laid his hand on her arm. There was something almost paternal in his manner which was in keeping with his stature.

'Moreover,' he went on, 'I will get there in time. I have an immense respect for Meredith. If he said that he could hold out for four months, I should say that he could hold out for six. There is no one like Meredith, once he makes up his mind to take things seriously.'

It was not very well done, and she probably saw through it. She probably knew that he was as anxious as she was herself. But his very presence was full of comfort. It somehow brought a change to the moral atmosphere—a sense of purposeful, direct simplicity which was new to the West African Coast.

'I will send over to the factory for Maurice,' said the girl. 'He has been hard at work getting together your men. If your telegram had not come he was going up to the Plateau himself.'

Oscar looked slightly surprised. That did not sound like Maurice Gordon.

'I believe you are almost capable of going yourself,' said the big man with a slow smile.

'If I had been a man I should have been half-way there by this time.'

'Where is Durnovo?' he asked suddenly.

'I believe he is in Loango. He has not been to this house for more than a fortnight; but Maurice has heard that he is still somewhere in Loango.'

Jocelyn paused. There was an expression on Guy Osgard's face which she rather liked, while it alarmed her.

'It is not likely,' she went on, 'that he will come here. I—I rather lost my temper with him, and said things which, I imagine, hurt his feelings.'

Osgard nodded gravely.

'I'm rather afraid of doing that myself,' he said; 'only it will not be his feelings.'

'I do not think,' she replied, 'that it would be at all expedient to say or do anything at present. He must go with you to the Plateau. Afterwards—perhaps.'

Osgard laughed quietly.

'Ah,' he said, 'that sounds like one of Meredith's propositions. But he does not mean it any more than you do.'

'I do mean it,' replied Jocelyn quietly. There is no hatred so complete, so merciless, as the hatred of a woman for one who has wronged the man she loves. At such times women do not pause to give fair play. They make no allowance.

Jocelyn Gordon found a sort of fearful joy in the anger of this self-contained Englishman. It was an unfathomed mine of possible punishment over which she could in thought hold Victor Durnovo.

'Nothing,' she went on, 'could be too mean—nothing could be mean enough—to mete out to him in payment of his own treachery and cowardice.'

She went to a drawer in her writing-table and took from it an almanac.

'The letter you have in your hand,' she said, 'was handed to Mr. Durnovo exactly a month ago by the woman at Msala. From that time to this he has done nothing. He has simply abandoned Mr. Meredith.'

'He is in Loango?' inquired Osgard, with a premonitory sense of enjoyment in his voice.

'Yes.'

'Does he know that you have sent for me?'

'No,' replied Jocelyn.

Guy Osgard smiled.

'I think I will go and look for him,' he said.

At dusk that same evening there was a singular incident in the bar-room of the only hotel in Loango.

Victor Durnovo was there, surrounded by a few friends of antecedents and blood similar to his own. They were having a convivial time of it, and the consumption of whisky was greater than might be deemed discreet in such a climate as that of Loango.

Durnovo was in the act of raising his glass to his lips when the open doorway was darkened, and Guy Oscar stood before him. The half-bred's jaw dropped; the glass was set down again rather unsteadily on the zinc-covered counter.

'I want you,' said Oscar.

There was a little pause, an ominous silence, and Victor Durnovo slowly followed Oscar out of the room, leaving that ominous silence behind.

'I leave for Msala to-night,' said Oscar, when they were outside, 'and you are coming with me.'

'I'll see you damned first!' replied Durnovo, with a courage born of Irish whisky.

Guy Oscar said nothing, but he stretched out his right hand suddenly. His fingers closed in the collar of Victor Durnovo's coat, and that parti-coloured scion of two races found himself feebly trotting through the one street of Loango.

'Le' go!' he gasped.

But the hand at his neck neither relinquished nor contracted. When they reached the beach the embarkation of the little army was going forward under Maurice Gordon's supervision. Victor looked at Gordon. He reflected over the trump card held in his hand, but he was too skilful to play it then.

(To be continued.)

MEMORIES OF THE MASTER OF BALLIOL.

It was a very remarkable gathering—that gathering of men in the Balliol Chapel—to mourn for the Master who had been taken from their head. Walkers in various paths of life, thinkers of various ways of thought, had found their paths and ways all converge in sorrow for a common loss—not only to the College, but to their time and fatherland. The coffin lay upon its trestles shoulder high. Over it fell a purple pall, made white with floral tributes; but the greatest tribute there was the presence of such men of busy life and active mind, come to pay grateful homage to the memory of their spiritual father. For indeed he was their spiritual even as he was their intellectual father, he who for so many years of incessant labour and marvellous energy had taught them all how best to be about their Father's business.

A Scotch philosopher, an English lord, and a Japanese earl came by me and took their seats in silent sadness. The thought of the secret of Jowett's power to reach, through these his pupils, such divers worlds crossed one's mind, and as one noted that just opposite sat together the Dean of Westminster, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Professor Huxley, the wonder grew.

Then forth from the chapel we went, a great crowd. But where were the personal mourners? where the relatives? Close behind the coffin came the faithful servants of the house, hardly able to restrain their grief; but brothers and sisters, nephews or nieces, there were none. Only, as we moved through the quiet quadrangle towards the St. Giles' entrance, a voice seemed to say, 'I have no need of relations in the flesh, seeing I have such near ones in the spirit. Behold! all these that follow me are sons.' It was indeed a striking instance of the strength of the spiritual tie that this man, who sixty years ago had taken Balliol College unto himself as bride, should now be borne along to burial by such a family of sons and daughters (for women were of the company) as followed the coffin through the broad St. Giles and the narrow-streeted suburb, to that unlovely and unlovable resting-place in Jericho.

'I owe everything to the College,' Jowett used to say; and if one had been tempted to have replied, 'The College owes every-

thing to you,' the Master would certainly have said, 'Not at all, not at all! You don't know what you are talking about.' And, in a sense, it was true. For the little fair-haired lad, of cherub face, clad in tail-coat and short breeches tied at the knee with blue ribbon, who was the joke of his competitors for the Balliol Scholarship long years ago, came nobody quite knew from whence, and seemed to have no relatives to return to. He might have been the son of a certain gentleman fond of flowers, of whom in 1810, at Cambridge, ran the quatrain—

'A little garden little Jowett made,
And fenced it with a little palisade.
If you would know the mind of little Jowett,
This little garden does no little show it.'

Or, again, he might be the son of a worthy printer in Bolt Court, London. Some averred that his parents were well-known linen-drappers, near St. Paul's School. All that was really known was that, from the day he won the Scholarship, Balliol became to the boy's heart—home. He never talked at all about his relations—indeed seemed a little huffed when asked after a certain cousin who was known as 'Joe Jowett' in the Kettering neighbourhood some thirty years ago, and answered sharply:

'I don't know what is become of him. I never knew him.'

To such an apparently friendless youth Balliol became father, mother, sister, and brother; and one could understand upon reflection what was meant when he said, 'I owe everything to the College.' For he had climbed from high to higher. Scholar, Fellow, and Tutor; all but Master in 1854; Master in 1870; unchanging in his love and devotion to the great trust imposed upon him; changeless almost in cherubic face; changeless in dress—tail-coated to the last—and so unchangeable in his affectionate regard for the wife he had espoused when he became a Scholar, that the very last words that fell from his lips before he died were 'My love to the College.' What were the secrets of this life of influence? They were many. First and foremost, resistless and untiring energy. In the old tutorial days, before he became Master, his doors were open to every undergraduate who cared to be helped. Many a don felt that the day's work ceased with the last lecture; most were confident that after Hall came Common-room, and after Common-room rest, perhaps sleep. But from eight o'clock till midnight a stream of young men might be seen passing up to Jowett's rooms, with essay, iambics, Greek

verse or prose—all coming, by invitation, for advice and help, and taking away not only corrections in metre and style, but new thoughts about the worth of work done thoroughly, and the possibility of serving others than themselves by the work they took in hand. It was this resistless energy that made him, as an undergraduate, work thirteen hours a day, as he once told a Siamese prince, in my hearing.

The said Siamese prince had, as the porter pompously expressed it, 'Comed into Balliol by the Master's front door, Sir,' had entered for his 'Smalls,' had telegraphed, so it was popularly understood, to his father that he was in for this, his first examination, and had paid for a reply telegram, which, it is asserted, ran as follows: 'It is well. Fourteen youths of the nobler sort have been sacrificed.' But the propitiatory offering in Siam had failed to help in the battle of the schools. The prince had been plowed, and was sent for by the Master.

'I am much ashamed of you,' said Jowett, in his sternest and jerkiest manner; 'you are very idle—very idle. You are no credit to your country, or to this College. How many hours a day do you work?'

To which the Siamese answered, smilingly, 'Aw, Master, I do work very hard. Sometimes three hours.'

To whom replied the Master, 'You ought to work at least eight hours. When I was your age I worked thirteen.'

It is true that one was convulsed at the time by hearing the Prince say, with a grin from ear to ear, but in all good faith, 'Aw, but Master, you have such a very big head!' but that 'I used to work thirteen hours a day' sank deep into one's mind.

It was this same unquenchable energy that made Jowett (at least so it is reported), when he was beginning to be ill two years ago, on hearing from his medical attendant that he was very seriously sick and must keep absolutely quiet, after much question and answer about the symptoms, bow the doctor out of his bedroom, with 'Thank you, thank you!'—then rise from his bed, dress, order a hansom, go up to London, transact some business he felt important, and return to his bed. It was the same spirit that, as late as three years ago, when I met him at a station, refused to allow me to carry his luggage for him to the conveyance, with a short 'I can do it myself.' It was this spirit that, when on the occasion of the Laureate's funeral, a year ago, I proffered him an arm as we descended the long steps from the Chapter House to

the cloisters, made him say, a little sharply, 'No, no; I don't want an arm. Just steady me—that's all.'

Another secret of his influence with men was his transparent candour—candour too transparent to be rude. One remembers how, at the first breakfast with the Master, we, who as trembling undergraduates had talked, or thought we had talked, of all things under heaven and on earth, and had been unable to extract any replies whatever, heard from the Master's lips his opinion of our chatter—'Good morning, gentlemen. I think you must cultivate conversational powers. Good morning.'

This candour was so natural to the man that at times he ran risks of being thought to be personal. Thus, for example, in one of his sermons in chapel we were electrified to hear him once say, 'We see our old friends sitting in their study-chairs and getting narrower and narrower every day.' Now, we saw one of those old friends actually sitting within a few feet of the preacher, and our ears tingled for the Master; but it was quite evident that the preacher was in that condition of mind upon the matter that friends *qua* persons had ceased to exist for him, and the truth he wished to press home of the need of wide sympathy to the end of life had obliterated all thought or fear of the person of man.

From anyone else it might have seemed a little rude to take a man out for a long walk, make no reply to a remark about the weather that had been at last made in sheer desperation, walk back a mile in silence, and turn round on the doorstep, shake hands, and say: 'I don't think much of that last remark of yours—good-day'; but it came naturally from Jowett, and was said with such evident intent not to harm, but to help, that the man was not hurt by it at all.

By the way, what funny things those silent walks were! The Master would, after a lap or two of silence, suddenly break to humming a tune, and after a turn or two of humming would relapse into silence. Sometimes he would astonish his companions by saying, 'Shall we run and get warm?' and away he would go till the younger would cry, 'Hold; enough!'

It was this candour that made him say once to a talkative young fellow who had come up to compete for the Balliol Scholarship, and who had come into breakfast with his competitor—a very shy boy—and had asked whether his rival was a clever boy, 'Yes; he'll get the Scholarship—not you.'

It was this candour that came to the front at a dinner-party of

men (old Balliol scholars) who had passed out with honours from the College, and were serving their country in various public posts of importance. One of them said, 'Master, we should be very sorry to have to go in for the Balliol Scholarship now; we should none of us pass,' and all expected to hear Jowett say, 'Oh, nonsense! You are all better scholars now than then.' But Jowett glanced round the table, and just said, 'Yes, one of you would—Stanley, here.'

It was this candour that enabled him, as it was currently reported, to say to the young man who had thrown up an important post in the Indian Civil Service and taken the twelve-shillings-a-week pay of a Captain in the Salvation Army, 'I always thought you a foolish young man; but, on the whole, I have come to the conclusion that this is the wisest step you could have taken.'

Once I feared his blunt outspokenness would have got him into serious trouble. A drunken flyman, one fine moonlight night, came to take us home after dinner from the house of a friend, and our host had gone to the door and expostulated with the incapable coachman. When we went out the driver had got down from the box, and appeared to wish to be squaring up to the Master, with the words, 'This gen'man says I'm drunk. What do you say?' I shall not soon forget the look of calm serenity, nor the absolute truthfulness and tone of unflinching assertion, with which Jowett—who might have been pardoned for a certain evasion under the circumstances—said to the flyman militant, 'Yes, you are drunk—very drunk indeed.'

Of course, at times this blunt outspokenness and absolute reality were felt to be galling. Men who were deservedly snubbed smarted under it. But then the Master knew generally what was in man; he studied men's characters, observed men closely, and even on the torture-rack of his long silences he learned something of their inner lives. So that if his words were sharp, they were often salutary.

A Greek scholar, with a great reputation and a fairly good opinion of himself, came up from a Scotch University and showed up an incontestably good copy of Greek Iambics. Jowett looked them over, and to the young man expectant of great praise quietly said, with his quaint blink of the eye, 'Do you think, Mr. So-and-So, you could do anything in the way of mathematics?'

On another occasion, at one of the test-by-silence breakfasts, a young man who did most of the chatter said to his neighbour,

'I seem to be doing all the talking.' Jowett overheard him, and answered, 'Yes; very young men generally do that.'

This reality of the Master made him impatient of all sham or shoddy, and very much inclined to distrust all gush and all apparent unreality. It was a common story in old Balliol days that an undergraduate who had attended the Master's lectures on 'Natural Religion' thought it the right thing to pose as an unbeliever, and said, 'The fact is, Master, I cannot find evidence of a god anywhere.'

'You must find one by midnight, or you will go down to-morrow,' was the sharp answer that brought the young man to his senses, and discovered a Divinity that shaped his ends where it was least expected, in the clear common sense that would stand no trifling or levity in serious things.

I remember his saying to a young man who had been talking rather gushingly of his love for the poets, 'Do you ever write poetry, Mr. M——?' 'Yes—well, I do something in that way,' was the answer. 'Never mind,' said the Master, 'how much you write, as long as you burn it all.' It was good advice, and it was said with such a kindly smile that it was felt for good.

On another occasion an undergraduate gushed considerably about the glory of the bright spring day. 'The shower of blossom the song of birds, the music of bees—what a gift from Heaven it all is! It makes us all poets. Does it not make you feel poetical, Master?' said the rash youth. 'No,' said Jowett testily, 'I think not. Take some more tea.'

Jowett's reality could not stand conceit a bit more than he could away with idleness. Instead of saying, as Harry Smith would say, 'My dear sir, you are a very young man and belong to a very old College,' Jowett would say straight out, 'You are a very conceited young man; do not be so foolish.'

Akin to this love of reality was a love of naturalness that at times almost appeared simplicity. The Master's easy manner with women, and his pleasure in the company of children, was the result of this love of naturalness. The way in which he shared his confidence with the servants of his household, his close friendship with his secretary whom he had trained to the work, was part of his sincere delight in naturalness. On one occasion a friend of mine had forgotten the hour for reading essays to the Master till it was too late for him to go home and change his boating-dress. He came up breathless from the boats in a Balliol blazer, knocked

at the study-door, and said, 'I am very sorry, Master, I clean forgot the time, and have run up straight from the boats to read my essay. I know I ought to have come in cap and gown, but I really have not had time to go to my lodgings.'

To the astonishment of the brother essayists assembled, Jowett smiled, and said, 'Come in, come in. I quite understand.' It was the naturalness of the man in the blazer that had appealed to the Master's heart.

There was also about the Master an attractiveness to business men from the way in which he went to the point in few words. As Vice-Chancellor men said his ability to transact business swiftly was astonishing.

Of course, it is true that sometimes in council or debate he was accused of being very deaf at judicious moments, and so not putting a motion which he knew would be the direct opposite of what he wished or felt was wise; but even then his wisdom, his determination not to be caught napping, called forth the admiration of his opponents. Undergraduates often experienced how wide-awake the apparently comatose Master was, and this especially at essay-time. A friend of mine had forgotten till too late the weekly task, and accordingly had written six instead of twelve sheets of rubbish. Jowett appeared to be asleep, and the reader read very slowly and majestically, and ended the 'linked sweetness long drawn out' with a grand rhetorical flourish, as much as to say, 'You see what a hard-working young fellow I am, and how industriously I have performed the allotted task!' Jowett just said, 'Read on, please,' in his little chirping voice, and my friend was floored.

That piping chirrup of the Master's was very catching. One at least of the undergraduates had by imitation become so unconsciously like of speech that we who were assembled in the Master's study to hear the essays read, and wait our turn for execution, were horrified and convulsed to hear Jowett say at the end of the essay, 'Very bald, very bald,' in his quaint falsetto, and to hear in answer from the culprit in just the same falsetto with a crack in it, 'Oh! do you think so?' We expected an explosion, but the Master was always master of himself, and he simply stirred the fire, and said, 'Next, please.'

I suppose it was in his business capacity that his brevity of speech stood the Master in best stead. Many instances occur of this commendable brevity.

There had been a luncheon party in College, and, after it, the young men who had well lunched thought it the proper way of showing their appreciation of their host's kindness to bolt him into his room and pepper his windows with rolls. Jowett watched the proceeding from his oriel window, summoned the host, and said, 'You should not have such friends. If bread-throwing were the rule, life in College would be intolerable. You are gated for a week.'

On another occasion a grand complaint was made about the toughness of meat in Hall. 'The meat, sir, is not fit for a gentleman to eat,' said the leader of the malcontents. Jowett touched his bell, called his trusty servant. 'Go to the kitchen; bring me a plate of meat from the same joint.' We waited and wondered. Up came the plate, salt and bread and potatoes to boot. Down sat the Master. He presently looked up at us, blinked eyes, and said, 'It is quite good enough for me. Good evening, gentlemen.'

The leader of the band was in a difficulty; the syllogism was too apparent, and we beat a hasty retreat. It is fair to say that the Balliol cookery did improve afterwards. For Jowett was a man of strong common sense. He knew that if men were doing hard work with their brains they must rest, and they must eat. His advice to freshmen, 'Get through smalls, cultivate conversational powers, entertain your friends,' had some bearing upon the former need; and reforms in the Balliol kitchen which he wrought had bearing upon the latter.

Jowett never thought any details of College management beneath him. I used to think it almost a pathetic waste of his precious time that he should glance each Saturday through my 'Battells' bill, and interview 'the Dinner Committee' four times with every moon, but the Master did not think so.

How carefully he looked after the bodily needs of his pupils many a man saved from a bad breakdown before the schools can testify, who had suddenly received a little note: 'Dear So-and so, you are looking tired and need a rest. Go down for the next three days to my house at Malvern. Yours truly, B. Jowett.'

Nor can one forget how this same kindly concern was shown to others than those of the College. When Mr. T. H. Green died, a scholarship was set on foot to enable boys who were at the National Schools in Oxford to proceed to the High School. A little delicate lad gained such a scholarship. Jowett knew his

mother's circumstances, and said quietly: 'The boy must dine here every day he is at school. He cannot work his brains unless he be well fed.' And all through that boy's school-time the Master took care that he should fare well. That lad is now a professor, an honour to the town that bred him and the College that fed him.

But Jowett's brevity of speech and despatch of business never shone more than on the great occasion of his dealing with the refractory washerwomen of Balliol. These worthy dames struck for higher wage in one department. Twelve collars for a shilling was, I believe, the statutory price. They came to interview the Master.

'The washerwomen have come to see you,' said the butler.

'Show the ladies up,' said the Master. They clumped into the room to find him fiddling with the poker at the ashes in the grate. He turned round. 'Will you wash twelve collars for a shilling?' They began to expostulate. He touched the bell; in came the butler. 'Show the ladies down.'

Presently the butler appeared again:

'They seem very sorry, sir—would like to see you again.'

'Show them up.' The washerwomen found the Master intent, as before, on the fire-grate. 'Will you wash twelve collars for a shilling?' piped his cheery little voice. A stalwart speaker began to make explanations. He touched the bell. 'Show these ladies down,' said he, and down they went. Again the butler expressed a hope that he would see them. 'Certainly; show them up.' They entered the room. 'Will you wash twelve collars for a shilling?' 'We will,' they cried. 'Thank you—good-day, good-day,' said the Master; and, touching the bell, he said, 'Knight, show these ladies down'—and the strike was over.

One of the secrets of Jowett's power with men was doubtless his sense of humour. He had a peculiar way of rubbing his hands together as if he enjoyed the joke, which added point to it. He would often tell stories against himself—not that he ever told how when a certain worthy fellow-tutor, with somewhat of a lacustrine name, hoping to score off him, once said, 'Do you know what they call you in College? They call you "little Benjamin,"' he turned the tables by saying, 'And do you know what they call you? They call you "Puddle."' It was probably an invention impromptu, but it was smart. Nor did he ever report the quaint love-passage in his life when the young *fiancée* who wished to show the Master how much she valued his attention to

her and her brother, whom she had been nursing in a serious illness at Balliol, and who, with her wedding-day in mind, had said girlishly and gushingly, 'Dear Master! I have but one more request to make. I know you won't refuse. Will you marry me?' For it was currently reported that on this occasion Jowett was taken off guard, in his delightful simplicity. The Head of the College fidgeted—hesitated—blushed—poked the fire—rose—walked briskly up and down the room, and answered, 'No, no. I don't think we should either of us be happy.' It is, however, fair to add that another version of the story looks as if the Master had entered thoroughly into the joke, and that he covered the maiden with confusion by saying, 'I think your request is rather premature.'

But Jowett delighted to recall the time when in consequence of Calverley being sent down for some prank certain windows in Hall were broken by resentful friends, and would tell how Dr. Jenkyns, whose attention was called to this serious breach of College windows and discipline, said, 'I rayther think, Mr. Dean, that it was done by lightning.'

It was not the only time that the then master of Balliol, Dr. Jenkyns, had a blind eye for a good purpose. For when, after some College wine, an excited undergraduate, clad in white surplice, had climbed into the chestnut-tree, and was making night hideous, the Bursar had called the master's attention to it, Dr. Jenkyns, peering up into the branches, replied, 'I rayther think I do see some kind of white bird, Mr. Bursar.' Jowett always laughed as he told this. Another story he delighted to recount was that of the rich lady who, when asked to subscribe to the conversion of the Jews, answered, 'No, not a penny; they are quite rich enough to convert themselves.' Nor could he ever mention Tait's reply to those who condoled with him on the difficulty of an archiepiscopate—'Yes, yes; but it has large compensations, you know'—without a good chuckle.

Jowett's kindness to the Jews was remarkable. He did not proselytise; on the contrary, he encouraged them to see that the services of the synagogue should be organised and kept up in Oxford. One of the most touching notices *in memoriam* of the Master came from the pen of a Balliol Jew. But to return to Jowett's humour.

This sense of humour, coupled with a swift insight into men's minds, was a great engine in his hands. It enabled him on many

an occasion to turn the laugh against the laugher. There are those who remember how, at the end of a lecture, when he was being pestered by a youth's questions as to the difference between the conjunctive and subjunctive moods, he affected not to have heard the questioner, and said, 'Will you be kind enough to repeat the question?' Then the unfortunately rash one repeated his foolish question, and Jowett, seeing that the whole class was getting fidgety and restive at being thus detained, said, 'I don't quite understand.' For the third time the youth, now abashed by his own stupidity, and conscious of the indignation of his companions, kept in durance, stammered out his question, and the lecturer just blinked eyes and said, with the blandest smile, 'I really don't know,' and left it to the indignant class to settle the question with the questioner.

Jowett was a close observer of faces as index to the mind, and it was wonderful how accurate his diagnosis often was. I remember hearing how he once looked upon the photograph of a lady—famous since in the world of thought and philanthropy—whom he had no personal acquaintance with, and how he said 'That lady lives in a world of high moral excitement'—which was certainly and absolutely true.

But the power of the Master of Balliol lay also in his ability to discriminate—to enter into the varied characters of the young men who passed under his ken. 'If you want to be a successful teacher,' he once said to the head master of a public school, 'you must know the intellectual needs of every member of your class.' This advice he acted on himself. With a surprising swiftness of insight, he got by very few occasions of personal meeting a pretty accurate idea of the mental and moral capacities of each member of the College. He got to know more: he learned the peculiar difficulties of the home-life—the pecuniary and other troubles that hampered the progress of many in their start in life; and it is not too much to say that whenever and wherever there was a *bonâ fide* need for sympathy and succour the Master was at the pupil's side, the Master's voice in the pupil's ear, the Master's purse in the pupil's hand. It is true that the best things in a good man's life are the little unremembered acts of constant kindness, then the best of Jowett's life will never be recorded on earth, for his right hand would not let his left hand know what it did of charity and love.

And only those in far-off parts of the world can testify how that love followed them constantly, and seemed to care, with

ceaseless and individual sympathy, for the quiet worker in the distant field. It is true the Master always felt that nothing succeeded like success, and would say pithily, 'Never retract, never explain, never apologise'—nay, would sometimes run risk of being looked upon as of the world worldly in his precepts to those who were just starting on their walk in life.

But all who knew the Master well knew that he cared as little for success as a personal thing for his pupils as he had cared for it for himself. What he coveted for them was the vantage position from which they could help their time. He was sometimes accused of toadying to the grand and the great, because if a nobleman entered at Balliol the Master kept his eye upon him. But nothing could have been more false to fact or untrue to the Master's character. All he desired was to get on such intimate terms with the young scions of nobility as to influence their lives and mould their characters for good. He knew to what power they were born, and he was determined not to let the opportunity slip of getting them to look on life with his own larger views, and more unselfish eyes.

One of the attractive features of the Master's character to the undergraduate mind was his sympathy with fields of thought and knowledge into which he had never penetrated; for the Master was shockingly ignorant of some common things. He knew as little about the make of his body as of the building-up of a crystal. If he had been asked where his lungs were, or where his heart lay, he could not have told you. The whole range of physical and natural science was unexplored by him. But though he did not talk enthusiastically about the newer sciences, and made it possible for young wits to write—

I am Professor Benjamin Jowett,
All that can be known, I know it;
I am the Master of this College,
What I know not, is not knowledge.

It was a gross libel upon his large-hearted sympathy with men in other fields of labour; and the young chemist, or doctor, or mathematician, was as great an object of interest to him as even the young Greek philosopher. And Jowett was never ashamed to say 'I don't know.' Indeed, it was touching to see how he would encourage people to know what he did not. His saying, 'You must cultivate conversational powers,' was perhaps caused by his own feeling of his want of such power; and only a few weeks before his death he patted a little girl upon the head, and said,

with kindly smile, 'You must learn all about the flowers and stars, and how to play whist'—three branches of knowledge in which he himself was a complete tyro.

Of Jowett as a preacher, one's memory of the appearance of the man as he went and came from the pulpit almost obliterates the memory of the matter of his discourse. A friend once described him on these occasions as looking like 'an elderly cherub made ready for bed.' The tone, too, of the word 'charity' in his favourite prefatory collect always rings in one's ears. But though these sermons seldom betrayed feeling, they generally contained some pithy saying which stuck. In one of the last sermons preached in the Abbey of Westminster, for example, he said, 'Better is the foolishness of the enthusiast than the wisdom of the pessimist;' and such sayings as 'As you go forward in life never expect too much, never hope for too little,' or such a message as he gave the Clifton boys in his sermon on manners, 'There are only two rules for good manners. One is, Always think of others; the other is, Never think of yourself,' remain as echoes that cannot die. At times, it is true, when in his sermon he touched on the character of a dead friend his voice trembled a little; but generally one felt the discourses were essays rather than exhortation. It has been said that he seldom seemed to set forth the sinfulness of sin; yet, on the other hand, one who was at Balliol forty years ago once told me that he had attended one of the short religious talks which Jowett used then to give on Sunday evenings to a certain number of seriously-disposed undergraduates, and he came away with a conviction of the teacher's horror of sin which has remained with him ever since.

Of his deep personal piety none could doubt; of his fondness for certain Psalms and hymns those who were intimate with him can vouch. He did not care much for books of devotional exercise so common nowadays; but the fourteenth chapter of St. John will be found graven on his heart. A man's religious belief is tested by the presence of death. The Master had always an abiding sense of the shortness and uncertainty of life; but, as he told his friend Rogers, he had set his house in order, made all his arrangements, and meant to die like a Christian gentleman. He was quite calm when the 'mute, unquestionable figure' came up so close two years ago; indeed, when nearly *in extremis*, he astonished his nurse by the quiet way in which he said, 'Nurse, you should never look sad in a sick man's presence.' But he was glad to live. He had two years' more work he wished to do, and he was thankful

for what he called a respite. Those two years, he often said, were very happy ones; for the Master needed the affection of men, and those two years were a revelation to him of their affection and loving kindness towards him.

Besides, he got through the work he set his mind to do; and when at the last illness he finished the jotting down of his reminiscences of his dear friend Lord Tennyson, he could truly say, as he did say, 'I can rest now'—and so entered into the rest that cannot be broken.

One other secret of Jowett's success with men was his eternal youth of mind. It was a good object-lesson for them to find a man past three score years and ten determining that a cricket-ground should be obtained for the College, and taking upon himself the chief burden of soliciting, by private letters, subscriptions for the purchase.

It was a good lesson in the need of catholic taste to find an aged man, absolutely without any musical knowledge, determining that the undergraduate mind should be moved by the harmony of sweet sound to deeper feeling and finer sensibilities; and walking in Sunday after Sunday to the College-hall concert to show that he felt music was—as Luther put it—'a fair handmaid of God and near allied unto Divinity.' One does not wonder that all the audience rose on these occasions, as a matter of course, to do him homage, as the Master walked, cap in hand, to his seat upon the dais.

For here was a man who had fought a good fight for the sake of truth, tolerance, justice, and the cause of a higher idea of what education should be—still in the van of all wise reform, still able to startle and surprise men by the newness of his ideas, and the novelty of his methods to meet the new needs of his day; not only master of the art of getting men to work for others than themselves, but master of the art of securing their noblest sympathy and insuring their most affectionate regard.

It was not only as Master of the College but master of the College servants that he will be long remembered. Those who on the funeral day spoke with the College porter and the College scout, or talked with the faithful housekeeper and the servants at the Master's lodge, know well how true and thoughtful a friend they felt they had lost; and can realise how fine an example of the Christian type of generous English gentleman went away from Oxford when the Master of Balliol died. 'My love to the College' were his last words.

JANUARY DAYS IN CEYLON.

III.

NEWERA-ELIYA.

THE mountain railway of Ceylon ascends to a height of six thousand feet above the level of the sea, and in the journey from the tropical plains of Colombo to the highland sanatorium of Newera-Eliya we pass, between sunrise and sunset, from the torrid to the temperate zone. After leaving Kandy the line traverses a wilderness of palm and bamboo, with the silvery waters of the swift Mahaelli-Ganga shining through the green vistas of feathery foliage. Beyond the luxuriant verdure of these shadowy woods lies the great tea district of Hatton, where the terraced mountainsides are ruthlessly cleared of jungle and disfigured by the rows of round green bushes, clipped until no projecting leaf or twig breaks their rigid uniformity of outline. Higher still the glossy foliage and snowy blossoms of the coffee plantations extend for many miles, sheltered by the blue peaks of Dimbulla. Mountain streams swirl through rocky gorges, and the music of falling water fills the air, as our upward way penetrates a sea of drifting clouds which float in fleecy masses round the flanks of the hills, and shroud the village of Nanuoya, where the coach for Newera-Eliya awaits the arrival of the train. The road borders a forest-clad gorge, with tall cliffs towering overhead and a turbulent river foaming through the deep ravine below. The region of palm and cocoa-nut is left far behind, but magnificent tree-ferns take their place, clinging to the rocky precipices and fringing the deep glens with branching fronds. The lofty tableland of Newera-Eliya, at the summit of the pass, seems far removed from the tropical world of sunshine and colour, and the comparative bleakness of the desolate scenery suggests a Scottish moorland rather than an equatorial 'patena.' Virgin forest clothes the mountains which enclose the green and marshy plain. A melancholy lake winds between wooded shores, and the abrupt outline of the black Hakgalla Peak—in native parlance, the 'jaw' of the mountain chain—cuts sharply into the foreground. Evening closes in with mist and rain, and a welcome log-fire burns cheerily on the open hearth;

the yellow gleam of an unseen sunset fails to brighten the lonely landscape, and, as the mountain winds moan through the swaying boughs of sighing pines, we turn with a shiver from the dreary prospect to the ruddy glow of the firelit room.

A radiant morning follows the wet and windy night. The roses of dawn fade into the infinite azure of a cloudless sky, and the cool breath of the mountain air is an elixir of life. The grey tower of a tiny church rises beyond an avenue of golden wattles; pink and yellow bungalows nestle among clumps of trees, and the straggling native village which forms the nucleus of the mountain-station is just waking up to the business of the day. The first expedition from this little Cingalese 'city of the plain' is the ascent of Pederutallagalla—commonly abbreviated into 'Pedro'—the highest point of Ceylon, eight thousand feet above the sea and two thousand feet beyond Newera-Eliya. A pretty bridle-path climbs the mountain, clothed from base to summit with primeval forest, the gnarled and knotted branches of the ancient trees festooned with heavy wreaths of soft green moss, dripping with dew as they sway in the balmy breeze. The steep ascent ends in a long green ridge strewn with mossy boulders, in which guava-bushes have taken root; but, though ripening berries glow among the grey leaves, the luscious fruit loses its accustomed sweetness at this lofty altitude, and our desire for new experiences is soon satisfied. From the present vantage-point all the mountain ranges of Ceylon are visible tier above tier, chiselled like cones of turquoise against the paler blue of the rain-washed sky. Even the shadows of each rocky cleft and glen seem but rays of intensified light throwing purple gleams across the vivid blue. The serrated heights of Totapella, the sharp ridge of Naminakulia, and the bold cone of Peacock Mountain rise in sculptured outlines before us, while the majestic pyramid of Adam's Peak soars upward into heaven like a mighty altar, consecrated by countless ages of fervent devotion. This famous centre of Buddhist and Mohammedan pilgrimage has been revered as holy ground almost from the dawn of history. Myth and legend entwine the barren peak with an unfading wreath of memories, like clinging ivy round a ruined tower. The idea of Ceylon as the earthly Paradise culminates here, where it probably originated, and the verdant loveliness of the tropical island perpetuates the dream. A deep impression on the rocky summit is revered by the Mohammedan as the footprint of Adam, who left this trace of his presence in the Eden

from whence he was expelled to remind his descendants of the bitter consequences ensuing from the Fall. The tradition of the Buddhist world is a variation of the same story, the gigantic footprint being ascribed to Buddha, who impressed it upon the mountain-top when he crossed over from Ceylon to Siam with one mighty stride, thenceforth constituting the 'Kingdom of the White Elephant' the centre of Buddhism. A constant stream of pilgrims flows to the sacred mountain, climbing the painful stairs and perilous ladders of the steep ascent to the shrines which crown the peak, careless of the inevitable sufferings of hunger, thirst, and weariness aggravated by the vertical rays of the equatorial sun beating with fierce intensity upon the unsheltered cone. Only the tireless patience of the Oriental could in many cases accomplish a task which proves such a terrible ordeal to the aged and the sick that they often die in the attempt; but the sacrifice of life itself is not without consolation to the faithful pilgrim, for death on this sacred journey is regarded as a sure entrance within the open gate of heaven, and Buddhist self-renunciation joins hands with Moslem fatalism to smooth the rugged path which leads to 'Paradise regained.'

The magnificent panorama from the summit of Pedro embraces the whole island, and as we turn from the amphitheatre of sunlit mountains the eye ranges over a wilderness of sombre jungle, the lair of the leopard and the haunt of the cobra, to the blue sea breaking on the eastern coast eighty miles away.

Presently the scene changes, and snowy billows of cloud rise from the deep valleys, and extend for scores of miles and thousands of feet below us, while rifts in the veil of wreathing vapour disclose momentary glimpses of fields and forests far away. The weird effect of the strange transformation-scene suggests some magic vision of a tropical Eden revealed through Arctic snows. As the dense white clouds roll upward, and envelope the exposed ridge on which we stand, their icy chill soon drives us down the steep incline, and through flying mists and moss-wreathed trees we discern the green plains of distant Newera-Eliya, basking in sunshine which turns the winding lake into a sparkling mirror of burnished silver.

The Botanical Gardens of Hakgalla, rich in the typical vegetation of the temperate zone, are reached by a wooded defile, widening after the first six miles to display a panoramic view over the province of Uva, where successive ranges of grassy hills sweep

up from intervening valleys terraced and cultivated with rice, to blue chains of distant mountains. A still finer prospect of this remote province may be seen from the picturesque summer-house of the Gardens. In the foreground rises the great Hakgalla Peak, a noble forest-fringed rock which plays an important part in promoting the fine weather for which Uva is celebrated. Standing out in bold relief from the lower hills as a shoulder to the mountain system of Ceylon, this frowning height is situated meteorologically just on the borders of the two monsoons. When the tempestuous rains and drifting mists of the south-west monsoon sweep wildly across the island from the western coast, and rush over the mountain ranges towards Hakgalla, the rock acts as an impassable barrier to the fury of the elements. Beyond this phenomenal peak lies a land of perpetual calm and sunshine, where no rain falls, and to which no cloud can travel; or if an occasional wreath of mist should break away from the gloomy thunder-pile which broods over the western sky, it is speedily dissolved into transparency by the brilliant climate of Uva. We may stand on one side of the Hakgalla Peak within the region of the monsoon, and look through the last veil of rain draped between heaven and earth to the sun-scorched hills of Uva, thirsting for the refreshing showers which descend so near, though forbidden by some mysterious law of nature to pass beyond the prescribed limit. Eight hundred native villages are scattered over this apparently deserted province, into which European influences have scarcely penetrated, and an extension of the railway to Haputalle, on the borders of these grassy heights, is the only link between Uva and civilisation. A solitary shepherd driving his flock across the withered grass accentuates the loneliness of this pastoral province lying parched beneath the eternal blue of a cloudless sky, while the adjacent region is green and fertile, cooled by mountain winds and fed by frequent showers. The agricultural value of Uva will be quadrupled should the Government accomplish the proposition of planting trees on the sunny hills in order to attract the rainfall now diverted by the magnetic influence of the Hakgalla Peak.

Within the Botanical Gardens the vegetation of temperate and sub-tropical climates finds a congenial soil, and even the familiar flowers of English lanes and hedgerows struggle for a feeble existence among the floral spoils of warmer latitudes. The trellised arches of a rosary surround a central fountain with bloom and

fragrance; great bushes of heliotrope and geranium alternate with thickets of white and yellow marguerites, pink camellias grow to the size of forest trees, and crimson tacsonia twines round branch and stem. A hedge of lemon verbena scents the air, datura swings its creamy chalices in the breeze, and multitudes of unknown blossoms, plants, and trees attest the infinite varieties of exotic growth which thrive in this favoured spot.

The cool green glades of the fernery look like ideal haunts of nymph and fairy; stately tree-ferns spread verdant canopies overhead, and the tempered sunlight filters through the feathery fronds in flickering streams of emerald radiance. Masses of pale green maidenhair and filmy lace-fern border rippling brooks and nod over foaming cascades crossed by rustic bridges, their wooden lattice-work concealed by a thick growth of elm and beech fern rooted in crevice and cranny. Hart's-tongue, of abnormal height and size, sways broad green leaves over crystal pools, and variegated plumes of gold and silver fern wave above mossy boulders. A forest of tropical ferns in endless variety lines a deep dell, and the green twilight of the secluded bowers enhances their visionary loveliness with suggestions of glamour and mystery.

The splendour of the tree-ferns peculiar to the highlands of Ceylon reaches a climax in the magnificent gorge of Kandepolla, where gigantic fronds ten feet in length bend over the waterfalls, which leap from crag to crag and swell the torrent dashing through the dark ravine. In the typical vegetation of the different zones nature seems to obey some immutable law of form which lies behind her operations as grammar lies behind language, controlling outward expression and bringing order from chaos. The tree-fern of the mountain heights, in drooping frond and pillared stem, imitates the sweeping curves of the graceful cocoa-nut which decks the lower levels with myriad slender shafts and feathery crowns, symbolising the acme of tropic luxuriance. Even the mosses which cushion each rocky niche carry out the prevailing type, and in their delicate stalks and fragile plumes resemble a miniature forest of mimic palms.

The road to Kandepolla skirts the rugged shoulder of Pedro, known as the Lovers' Leap, and celebrated as the scene of a romantic Cingalese legend.

A Kandyan prince of olden time when elephant-hunting in the jungle became separated from his companions in the chase, and lost his way amidst the dark labyrinth of tangled trees. He

was guided back to the path by a beautiful Kandyan girl of low caste, who emerged from one of the forest glades as the young prince stood in doubt beneath a lofty palm which marked the intersection of two diverging tracks. Admiration soon warmed into love, and the remonstrances of the king only strengthened his son's determination to espouse the dusky nymph of the woods. The old monarch vindicated the outraged dignity of the Kandyan crown by exercising the royal prerogative, and forbidding the unequal marriage; but his commands were set at naught by the elopement of the lovers, who fled to the woods, pursued by the king's warriors. Day by day the fugitives retreated farther into the recesses of the mountains, climbing ever onward through the tangled jungle into the veil of drifting cloud which hid pursuers and pursued, until they reached the wild forests which clothed the unknown heights of Pedro. The whistle of arrows and the glint of spears through the dark foliage at length showed that the soldiers were close upon them, just as they arrived on the verge of a sheer precipice which cut off their advance. Preferring instant death to capture and its accompanying tortures, the lovers locked themselves together in a farewell embrace and leaped over the cliffs into the dark valley two thousand feet below. Still, when the full moon silvers the black precipice of the Lovers' Leap, the native wayfarer passes with fear and trembling along the road beneath, and mutters a wild incantation as he grasps the amulet around his neck, afraid to look upward to the spot where his superstitious fears picture a shadowy figure crowned with waving plumes and bending over a weeping girl, who haunts the summit where the last kiss was pressed upon her dying lips. The mournful tale of passion and despair invests the Kandepolla route with a pathetic charm, but the grandeur of the scenery is excelled by the Rambodde Pass, which skirts another mountain gorge. Within the sheltered wall of the fern-fringed mountains orange-trees bend beneath a weight of golden fruit, their snowy blossoms mingling with the trailing garlands of pale blue passion-flower which festoon each bush and tree. Gorgeous caladiums line every watercourse, and yellow calceolarias grow thickly on the turf as cowslips in an English meadow. Scarlet sheaves of salvia and stately arum lilies bloom side by side, and vie in beauty with the climbing roses which flourish in this temperate clime to unexampled perfection.

The fascination of the lovely road culminates at the summit of the pass in a magnificent view across the mountain ranges to the Eastern sea. The sun is just sinking into the sapphire depths, and flushing the golden glow of the sky with unearthly hues of rose and amethyst, until the overarching heaven seems etherealised into a transparent veil, suffused with the mystic radiance of some hidden glory far beyond earthly ken.

A bearded native, in white skirt and plaid jacket, watches us with wondering eyes, as he sits down by the road-side to smooth out his oily black tresses before rolling them into a large chignon secured by a tortoiseshell comb; and a brown boy, clad only in a string of beads and the proverbial smile, pursues us with eager attentions until driven from the field by a dusky maiden in the comparatively full dress of a silver necklace and a yellow flounce. She demands instant payment for her services, with evident confidence in the irresistible nature of her charms, and on receiving her easily-earned *douceur* scampers back to the rustic toll-bar over which she presides, to dispute the passage of a bullock-cart which lumbers heavily up the hill, laden with green and purple sugar-cane from the torrid plains below. The upland plains or 'patenas' of the mountain heights are wholly different in character. A walk of eight miles takes us round the Moon Plains, past the lake and the pretty pink bungalow of the bishop's family, whose kindly hospitality is one of the bright memories belonging to Newera-Eliya. Leaving the water-side, the road traverses a green plateau full of discarded moonstone pits, from which the patenas take their name. The stones are still so plentiful in the district that the washing of gravel in search of various gems is a favourite amusement with visitors, whose perseverance is often rewarded by a promising collection of moonstones, garnets, and tourmalines. The solitude of the scene is only enlivened by a distant thud of hoofs across the turf, as two officers from the neighbouring barracks gallop across the plain for their morning ride. The road winds away into the dark depths of a beautiful ravine, and emerges at the head of the Barrack Lake, a narrow sheet of water extending to a second green patena which completes the circuitous route to the village of Newera-Eliya.

An expedition to the Elk Plains is still more interesting, but should only be undertaken with a native guide. The road descends for two miles to the iron bridge over the Nanuoya, a river which rises near the top of 'Pedro,' and after flowing

through the Newera-Eliya Lake leaps onward in successive cataracts to the village which bears its name. The first of the falls is spanned by a mossy bridle-path bridge, and before it was made many an early colonist had to choose between crossing the swollen river on foot at the peril of his life or passing the night amidst the corresponding dangers of the lonely forest. A rugged path ascends to the Lady's Waterfalls, two lovely cascades foaming down from steep cliffs, and spreading out like snowy fans on vast sheets of grey rock at the base. Higher up lies the Black Pool, a lonely tarn overshadowed by forest trees, with a gurgling stream pouring into it from above. Retracing our steps to the bridle-road, we ascend in half an hour to the Elk Plains, which extend in silent solitude before us. Here we are in the absolute wilderness of upland Ceylon, where the virgin beauty and freshness of Nature unspoilt by man instils a new sensation into every soul which vibrates to her mysterious voice. The rolling green patenas are cut off sheer and straight from the encircling belts of jungle as though measured off by human hands, a striking feature of these elevated regions which has never been satisfactorily explained. The mountain ranges which enclose the grassy plains are clothed from base to summit with primeval forest, heavily draped with moss which forms a green fringe hanging from every bough. An appalling loneliness broods over the scene, no song of bird stirs the silence, and the death-like hush which reigns over the gloomy forest is unbroken even by the rustle of a leaf; for noon is the midnight of the tropics, and the black depths of the haunted jungle are wrapped in spellbound sleep. At nightfall the lithe cheetah glides stealthily through the shadows, and couches for his prey among the crowding trees. The branching antlers of the elk rise above the tangled undergrowth, and the moose-deer browses in the shade of the mossy boughs along which the wild-cat creeps, while the savage boar roots among the fallen leaves. When the rising moon illuminates the lonely landscape, herds of wild elephants emerge from the dark jungle and roam over the vast expanse of desolate country which still renders the interior of Ceylon almost an unknown land. The elephant grass, which breaks the uniformity of the undulating plain with rustling sheaves of long green spears, is the forage for which the stragglers of the herd scour the patenas, and many Cingalese superstitions linger round this elevated tableland. The recent spoor of an elephant marks our track, and ceases at a deep pool known to be

a favourite drinking-place of the wild animals which haunt the jungle. A deaf elephant frequently perambulates the Elk Plains; he is supposed to be sacred to Buddha and therefore invulnerable, no sportsman having hitherto succeeded in piercing his hide—a fact probably due to the great age of the animal.

The spice of danger which attends this excursion gives it a strange fascination. Who can tell what unknown terrors are lurking within the black walls of forest which gradually encroach upon the narrowing patena until it becomes merely a green glade between the dense masses of impenetrable jungle? Before the rough track enters the forest which fills up the foreground the deepening gloom and oppressive silence impress the Cingalese guide with a sudden sense of danger, and he counsels a speedy return. The spoor of the elephant seems, in the first instance, to have excited his fears; but the native mind moves slowly, and his sluggish imagination has only just grasped the possibility of being chased by some infuriated animal. The happy unconsciousness of *definite* peril is destroyed at a blow, and a graphic description of the different modes of attack adopted by elephant and wild-boar scarcely tends to reassure us. The boundary-line of prudence has evidently been passed, although we escape unmolested; for the wild beasts are asleep in their lairs, and our quickened footsteps soon travel back to civilisation. On the confines of the Elk Plains we pause to contemplate the silent scene, which suggests such a wide range of novel ideas. These pastures, on which elk and elephant feed and fatten, are about to lose their wild and melancholy charm owing to the formation of a syndicate for prospecting the upland patenas in search of sapphires, rubies, gold and tin. The elephants are so numerous on the higher plateaux beyond the forest that a small rest-house within twenty miles of Newera-Eliya, being left for a few weeks without a custodian, was battered down by a disapproving herd. The barbaric-looking Veddas, recognised as the true aborigines of Ceylon, though fast dying out before the march of advancing civilisation, are still to be found encamped amid the fastnesses of nature on the highest and loneliest points, and especially near a spot known as 'The World's End,' beyond the loftiest range of patenas. This tremendous precipice overlooks the rich and fertile country seven thousand feet beneath, flourishing with every industry of Eastern life and European civilisation, but separated from the great upland solitudes by an impassable abyss which but few human eyes have ever looked across. The

infinite variety of Cingalese scenery can only be fully realised by a visit to these elevated plains, almost untrodden save by European sportsmen or native hunters.

Heavy clouds are gathering over the summer sky, and the low roll of distant thunder echoes across the mysterious wilderness as a vivid flash of lightning disturbs our reverie and necessitates instant departure. Crowds of coolies are hurrying away from the tea-estates in the valley to seek shelter from the approaching storm, carrying their weekly dole of rice just distributed from heavily-laden waggons roofed with palm-leaf thatch. A black pall, riven by red arrows of lightning, now shrouds the heavens and darkens the earth, deafening peals of thunder reverberate through the mountain glens, and as we reach Newera-Eliya the tempest bursts with tropical fury in sheets of rain and hurricanes of wind, which rave across the open plains and tear up forest trees, revealing those terrible forces of nature which often sleep until their existence is forgotten under the cloudless blue of equatorial skies.

IV.

ANARADHUPURA.

The historic past of Ceylon recedes into that twilight of dreamland and myth which veils the infancy of the world in a golden haze of mystery, but the monumental memorials of the island authenticate the stirring drama of national life centred in Anaradhupura, 'the magnificent,' once the mighty capital of an ancient civilisation. The ruined city was buried for ages in an ever-increasing wilderness of jungle, which gradually effaced every vestige of human habitation. The lofty monoliths and columns were concealed by overarching boughs of forest trees, or strangled in the embrace of matted creepers which flung trailing wreaths and clasping tendrils in wild luxuriance round broken arch and ruined pillar, weaving inextricable meshes of verdure, and even transforming the cyclopean daghobas into the semblance of forest-clad hills. *Litera scripta manet*, and when in 1830 the deep green grave of equatorial vegetation yielded up its dead, it also disclosed the archives of the buried city, imperishably graven in the stones of her temples and palaces, and preserved from decay by the dense curtain of tropical greenery which excluded air and light. The discoverer of the architectural

marvels hidden in the forest depths of the central province was one Lieutenant Skinner, an English engineer, who during his survey of the interior cut his way through the jungle, and in felling a tree which obstructed his operations stripped a tangled mass of foliage from a sculptured capital which rose above the thick undergrowth. As the little band of pioneers advanced farther into the woods their axes rang against the stone walls of numerous enclosures, startling the wild animals from their lairs among ruined colonnades and deserted palaces, for centuries the undisturbed haunts of elephant, leopard, and deer. Peacocks trailed their gorgeous plumage along the stone pavement of flower-wreathed halls, and rosy clouds of flamingoes flew away with shrill cries from sculptured tanks where pelicans waded and fished in the shallow water. The report of the English engineers resulted in a special archæological survey, and the buried city was at length disinterred from her verdant tomb. The efforts of antiquarians were crowned with unexpected success, the numerous inscriptions being deciphered and explained, every onward step revealing fresh wonders to the scientific society which, with the sanction of the English Government, commenced and continued a systematic investigation of the extensive ruins. Corresponding instances of antiquarian discovery may be found in those Etruscan excavations of Northern Italy which proved the existence of forgotten dynasties in prehistoric times; but though the unknown story of Etruria remains an inscrutable mystery, the historical annals of Anaradhupura are preserved by indisputable 'sermons in stones.'

The journey from Kandy to the buried city is now easily accomplished by a branch line which runs through groves of cocoa-nut palms to Matale, a straggling native town in the midst of tea and coffee plantations. The early departure of the coach on the following morning necessitates a halt for the night at a little rest-house for travellers, and the remaining hours of daylight are occupied by a visit to the rock temple of Aluwihara, an ancient Buddhist shrine three miles away, containing two curious sanctuaries hewn out of the solid rock. A painted Buddha of colossal size and unutterable ugliness is exhibited with triumphant satisfaction by two yellow-robed monks, who escort us up rocky stairs and rude ladders to the topmost crag, which commands a fine panorama of blue mountains and waving woods. The roofs and walls of the yawning caverns which honeycomb the cliffs are lined with hundreds of huge bats, which cling to the

rock and hang in dark masses overhead, flapping their leathern wings with a noise like the whizzing of a steam-engine. The simple-minded monks decline our proffered gratuity with the courteous remark that they wish to give pleasure to the strangers, but not to be paid for doing so. The genuine kindness of these rural ascetics shows a higher ideal of religious duty than that of their brethren in places where contact with the world has rubbed off the bloom from the tender fruit of faith, and the gentle reproof surprises us with the fact that Buddhism, as well as Christianity, accepts the maxim that 'it is more blessed to give than to receive.' A green lane through which we return to Matale is a flowery vista of tropical loveliness, bordered and canopied by high hedges of datura trees, which meet overhead, swinging a thousand creamy bells and scenting the air with narcotic perfume. The temptation to break off the flower-laden branches would prove irresistible but for the repeated injunctions of an inexorable little guide, who pronounces the delicate blossoms to be poisonous if carried in the hand. At daybreak the lumbering coach starts for Anaradhupura, fifty miles farther along the great highway to Jaffna, the northern sea-port of Ceylon, and the usual landing-place of the Tamil coolies who migrate from Southern India to labour on the tea and coffee plantations of the island. The completeness of English organisation is exemplified on this great coolie route of more than two hundred miles. The improvident Tamil, destitute of all the appliances of civilisation, and taking no thought for the morrow, would often perish on the way, either from hunger or exposure to a vertical sun and tropical storms, but for the protection of the Government, which establishes rest-houses for coolies at intervals of ten miles, where shelter can be obtained and their scanty needs supplied. A coolie hospital, with an attendant European doctor, may be found every fourteen miles, and at these medical stations the sick are detained and tended, each immigrant undergoing strict examination, stringent precautions being taken to prevent the introduction of any infectious disease from India into Ceylon.

The long, straight road traverses the gloomy depths of the primeval forests, which extend for scores of miles on both sides. Shadowy paths, which lead to native villages buried in the dark recesses of the mysterious jungle, wind through the black mazes of interlacing trees, and in the monotonous grandeur of the rolling woods we realise that mystic charm peculiar to the wild solitudes

of untrammelled nature. The loneliness of the forest is occasionally varied by a rustic town which borders the road with palm-thatched huts and quaint stores of rude pottery, fruit, and tea. The rural population assemble to witness the arrival of the Royal Mail, with the slender budget of letters for English civilians of the provincial and forest departments. Sometimes a native messenger rushes breathlessly from the jungle to carry off the post to some distant forest camp from the coach, which is the solitary link with the outside world now that we are beyond the region of railways. A few clearings at the roadside give glimpses of bright green rice-fields, and crops of tobacco sheltered by curtains of rustling bananas. The monotony of the long drive is only broken by the constant change of the dilapidated team and the invariable difficulty of getting the new steeds under way, the whole complement of passengers being frequently required to descend and lend a hand either for pushing or pulling. The merry little party, consisting of an Indian officer, an English surveyor of village tanks, and a Portuguese burgher employed in the Civil Service as a ranger of forests, evidently appreciate the fun; but a native servant of the Governor, accompanying his master's baggage to Jaffua, now in dire straits of famine, declines to leave his treasures even for a moment. Anaradhupura has lately been inaccessible to visitors, owing to the furniture of the Government rest-house being requisitioned for the forest camp of the Austrian Archduke during his elephant-hunt in the province, where he has shocked the susceptibilities of Cingalese sportsmen by shooting a 'herder' instead of a 'rogue'—a *faux pas* equivalent in their eyes to aiming at a milch-cow in a farm-yard. As his Imperial Highness has shot six thousand head of game in the course of the previous year his skill cannot be called in question, though his knowledge may be at fault; and, happily for us, having slain his elephant, such as it is, the great man has broken up his camp and returned to the low country.

Slowly the day wears on; the sunset-light turns the great thickets of yellow daisies into a flame of colour, and glitters on the curious white and scarlet leaves, fried by the natives as vegetables, which relieve the dark green of the tropical woods. A black snake, sunning himself on the road, glides swiftly into the jungle, and as the glow fades from the sky, and the great stars shine out like lamps through the purple darkness of the Eastern night, the coach stops at a bungalow hemmed in by black walls of forest, and a long

row of lofty columns, looming mysteriously through the shadows, shows that we have at last reached the end of our journey. The little Government rest-house—cool, clean, and comfortable—is a welcome haven after the heat of the weary day, and we think pityingly of our Cingalese companion, with the prospect of two days and nights in the ramshackle coach before it can arrive at Jaffua. The flush of dawn still reddens the sky as we survey our surroundings next morning from the wide verandah. The rest-house stands in the midst of a verdant and park-like expanse, shaded by noble trees and bordered by dark aisles of forest. At intervals tall grey monoliths rise from masses of rich vegetation which clothe the base of every soaring column and crumbling wall with the branching fronds of fern and those boldly-cut leaves which make the commonest tropical weed a thing of beauty. The kind English judge of the district simplifies the exploration of the ruins by lending me his picturesque red cart, drawn by two beautiful white bullocks, and driven by a brown native, airily clad in a white handkerchief and turban. An expedition under the blazing sun of the hottest place in Ceylon would otherwise be a terrible ordeal, notwithstanding the delicious shade of the forest trees. The ruins are divided into an outer and an inner circle, and several quarters of the ancient city still lie buried beneath the heavy pall of tropical verdure, though many square miles have been cleared from the superincumbent masses of trees and parasites which weave their intricate network of root, branch, and stem round the monuments of forgotten creeds and vanished dynasties. The cyclopean daghobas, erected when Anaradhupura accepted the tenets of Buddhism, are the most marvellous of her existing relics; but traces of a much earlier creed have been discovered in this city of almost fabulous antiquity, where, according to ancient Pali documents, one hundred and sixty-five kings reigned in succession. The primitive religion seems to have been a species of sun-worship, firmly established by the growth of centuries, and consequently so difficult of eradication that it even permeated the later Buddhism, the sunward march of Buddhist processions and the inculcations to sunward worship being observed at a date when the original faith was professedly abandoned.

In the year B.C. 400 Anaradhupura covered an area of 2,563 square miles, and the measured distance from the northern to the southern gate of the city was sixteen miles. This ancient Cingalese metropolis was built upon a level plain, the brown sand of

the causeways being clearly defined against the white sand of the streets. The important thoroughfares described as Great King Street, Sun, and Moon Streets in ancient Pali manuscripts, written on the imperishable leaves of the talipot palm, sound curiously familiar to modern ears, and the fact of special suburbs being assigned to fakirs and to the worshippers of snakes and demons suggests an advanced stage of religious toleration. In the Great Brazen Palace a thousand priests occupied a monastery nine stories high, each story being assigned to a different grade of the nine-fold order. This rule necessitated the monks of highest ecclesiastical rank inhabiting the cells immediately beneath the brazen tiles of the lofty roof—a dubious honour for the aged and infirm in an equatorial climate. Six hundred granite pillars supported the Brazen Palace, surrounded by eight hundred brazen elephants, and containing a golden image of the sun and a silver figure of the moon beneath the white stone umbrella regarded as the Eastern symbol of sovereignty.

The broken colonnades which still remain formed but a small part of the original edifice; green garlands twine round carved lintel and decorated entablature, and long sprays of scarlet flowers climb over the stone canoes placed outside the gateway to receive the offerings of rice and saki made by faithful worshippers for the support of the priesthood. The Peacock Palace of the Kings occupies the original centre of the city, and the royal birds sculptured on arch and cornice retain the sharpness of their chiselled outlines, though nearly two thousand years have rolled away since the last scion of Anaradhupura's sovereign line was slain upon the battle-field. A large artificial lake forms the commencement of a chain of ancient tanks extending for more than fifty miles, and utilised as the present water supply of villages in the interior. Numerous bathing-tanks, in wonderful preservation, have been cleared from the jungle, which buried the ornamental scroll-work and carving of their balustraded stairways and terraces. The royal bathing-place bears a stone inscription, in the ancient Cingalese language, derived from a Sanscrit root, stating that the tank is for the exclusive use of the king. The remains of the royal elephant-stables, also authenticated by an inscription, stand near the spot, and at a respectful distance from the king's bath we see eight large bathing-tanks and two smaller pools, divided by a grassy terrace and a granite balustrade. The hoary statues of kings and saints which rise on every side, in devotional attitudes,

from the green tangle of luxuriant foliage testify to the religious character of Anaradhupura. In the year B.C. 307 the city accepted Buddhism at the hands of Mahindo, a royal missionary from the Indian peninsula, and the mighty daghobas which still tower above the forests became the outward expression of a deepening spiritual life. These bell-shaped shrines, built for the reception of sacred relics and costly offerings, were surmounted by the tall spire known as a *tee*. The subsequent mode of access to each daghoba was only revealed to the priesthood, and the great reliquaries were held in special reverence by the multitude, who wreathed the sacred domes on festivals with ropes of flowers—a task still performed by the hand of nature during the perpetual feast of blossoms which she celebrates in this tropical land.

In the year B.C. 161 King Dutughurimu deposited the relics in Ruanweli, or 'the Daghoba of Golden Dust,' now a massive dome of red brick covered with trees seeded by wandering birds, and surrounded by ruins of elephants in creamy chunam smooth as polished marble, and formerly enriched by tusks of real ivory. The dying king was carried round this daghoba, and laid on a carpet before it, in order that his last glance might rest upon the shrine which he had built. The priests by whom the monarch was enslaved endeavoured to calm his fears of the unknown future by extolling the meritorious work which he had accomplished; but his only comfort in the hour of death was the recollection of some simple deeds of kindness shown to the poor and needy. The daghoba had been erected as an act of atonement for eating a curry, with its accompanying chilis and sambals, without setting aside the prescribed portion for the priests. The foundation-stones of the shrine were trodden down by elephants wearing leathern shoes to protect their tender feet, and the fourfold superstructure was composed of clay, cement, sandstone, and brass, a glass *tee* crowning the summit in order to avert the lightning. A slab of granite marks the spot where the royal penitent expired, and his traditional tomb faces the shrine. The Abayagirya daghoba, fifty feet higher than St. Paul's Cathedral, covers an area of eight acres, enclosed by the ruined cells and chapels of a priestly college. On the crescent-shaped 'moonstones' of the ancient portals the seven-headed cobra, a Cingalese emblem of vigilance, is represented amidst garlands of flowers. This daghoba was built to commemorate the expulsion of the Malabar invaders, and the recovery of the throne by the hereditary line. The gigantic

dome was tunnelled by order of the Government, in search of an ancient religious library supposed to be hermetically sealed within the walls, but nothing was discovered beyond some strings of rude beads, probably the rosaries common to all historic creeds as the *memoria technica* of the uneducated. A flight of rugged steps ascends through tangled verdure to the summit of the daghoba, which commands a noble view of park and forest scenery, dotted with granite monoliths and broken columns, which extend beyond a line of tanks to the blue peaks of distant mountains.

In the green recesses of the gloomy forest stands the great Thuparama daghoba, the 'Delight of the Gods,' venerated as a shrine of extraordinary sanctity. The usual spiral *tee* here gives place to seven umbrellas of carven stone, tapering upward in diminishing stories, and signifying the royal supremacy of this imposing structure—the mighty casket built to contain a collar-bone of Buddha. A tall Palmyra palm and a temple-tree laden with a perfumed wealth of snowy blossom have seeded themselves on the green mound, adding to the pyramidal form of the noble daghoba. One hundred and thirty white pillars, with richly-carved capitals, stand out in bold relief from a dark background of forest trees, and mark the site of a second ecclesiastical college as large as many an English county town, the vicinity of the Thuparama daghoba to the monastery being regarded as an inestimable religious privilege. An additional consecration was bestowed on this hallowed spot in A.D. 311, when the ruined temple opposite the shrine was selected for the first resting-place of Buddha's Sacred Tooth, carried in solemn procession to the mountain sanctuary of distant Kandy by roads strewn ankle-deep in fragrant flowers. Anaradhupura contains seven cyclopean daghobas, and the three described above, and commonly known as the shrines of preaching, prayer, and adoration, take precedence of all others. The smaller daghobas scattered over the vast area of the ruined city contained the ashes of cremated monks and nuns revered as Buddhist saints. The forest-clad mountains of brickwork, with the exception of the brazen Ruanweli daghoba, were originally faced with costly chunam, composed of burnt oyster-shells pounded in cocoa-nut water, mixed with the gum of fruit-trees, and the marble purity of the snowy domes soaring into the deep blue of the tropical sky produced an effect of dazzling magnificence as they reflected the radiance of the sun from every polished surface. Various animals and birds are represented with

life-like accuracy on architrave and pediment, where the lion, elephant, horse, and bullock alternate with the royal peacock and the sacred geese, universally revered by Eastern nations, though the origin of the cult is lost in antiquity. The lotus occupies the same position in the decorative treatment of column and corbel as the acanthus in Greek architecture. The luxuriant growth of these sacred flowers, which open their rose and azure chalices by thousands in every tank and pool, probably results from the immense demand for the symbolical blossom in the bygone days of Anaradhupura's power and pride. Traces of sun-worship linger in the veneration of the lotus, sacred to Buddhist and Brahmin as to the early Egyptians, whose mystic rites correspond in numerous details with the various religious systems of India. The mysterious flower, which sinks below the water at sunset and rises to the surface with the earliest beam of returning light, was inseparably connected in the Oriental mind with those ideas of Divine power and magnetic influence ascribed to the sun as the sovereign ruler of the natural and spiritual worlds.

This ancient cultus culminated in the tropics, where the omnipresence of the god of day was an incontrovertible fact impressed upon the consciousness of the people with overwhelming force. We find that in B.C. 288 a golden lotus was carried in an ark to the sacred Bo-Tree of Anaradhupura, and that the priestly procession worshipped sunward beneath the quivering leaves of the green canopy overhead. This venerable tree, believed to be the most ancient in the world and planted 2,183 years ago, was a branch from the sacred peepul-tree of Buddha-Gya, and was brought hither by Mahindo, the apostle of Buddhism, in B.C. 307. The gnarled boughs of the original trunk, thinly veiled by a fluttering cloud of triangular leaves terminating in sharp points, rise in the midst of a thick grove sprung from the parent stock. The Bo-Tree is still a centre of pilgrimage, and native groups are now encamped before it, each family party sheltered by a gigantic palm-leaf which serves as a tent, the yellow fronds, curiously ribbed and fluted, forming fantastic curves and angles above the dark faces of the gaily-clad pilgrims. The stone terraces and sculptured steps of the paved enclosure, adorned with granite statues of Buddha, were royal gifts offered in honour of the holy tree; and the sacred monkeys which from time immemorial have frequented the grove were always maintained at the expense of the reigning monarch. The Bo-Tree is held in such profound veneration that

every bough broken off by the wind is borne in solemn procession round the enclosure, and finally cremated with elaborate funeral ceremonies.

Notwithstanding the vigilance of the yellow-robed custodian who follows me round the grove, I yield to the temptation of gathering a few leaves as souvenirs of the living monument to the early light which dawned upon the spiritual darkness of the Eastern world. The young priest looks aghast at the temerity of the unbeliever, and lays a restraining hand on mine as I raise it to the sacred bough, but his indignant glance melts into a compassionate smile as I carefully place the treasures already secured in a blotting-book. Perhaps further reflection suggests the possibility of some occult virtue emanating from the consecrated foliage with sufficient power to sanctify the sacrilege and convert the heretic. A rock temple in a range of crags at the end of a green glade contains curious chapels, approached by bamboo ladders and bridges of palm-trees which climb dizzy heights and span deep chasms. Several granite coffins lie outside the ruined houses of the priests, flanked by the mystic 'yoga stones' used as mediums of divination and prophecy. Oil and sandalwood were placed in the central hole and kindled into a flame, before which the seer sat in rapt abstraction, until his fixed gaze penetrated beyond the blaze of sacred fire into the mysteries of those upper and under worlds invisible to the natural man, but revealed to the eye of faith. A steep cliff, wreathed with vines and creepers, was the ancient citadel of Anaradhupura, and the caverns originally used as the magazines and guard-rooms of this almost impregnable fortress are now occupied by Buddhist hermits, supported by doles of rice from the pilgrims, who place their offerings in iron bowls left for the purpose on a ledge of rock outside the caves.

The noonday heat descends almost in visible and palpable form upon this ruined city of the jungle. The quivering atmosphere waves and dances like a floating veil between heaven and earth, while an unearthly hush steals over the forest, where foliage droops and flowers close their petals under the intolerable glare. Only the snakes which abound in fever-stricken Anaradhupura can brave the white heat of the tropical furnace, and sun themselves during the noontide hours with undisturbed security, while the patient oxen lie panting in their stalls, and the most enthusiastic explorers are compelled to take a siesta until the heat declines. Soon after

3 P.M. the leaves begin to whisper in their dreams, and a faint, indefinable sense of waking life just stirs the drowsy silence of the slumbering woods. The afternoon expedition round the outer circle is an ideal sylvan drive. The rough cart-track penetrates the green depths of the shadowy forests, where perpetual twilight broods beneath the sombre foliage of the stately ebony, and golden sunbeams gleam through the pale-green branches of slender satin-wood trees which relieve the gloom of the woodland verdure with the smooth whiteness of their glistening stems. Thickets of maidenhair spring from an emerald carpet of velvet moss and choke the murmuring brooks which glide between flowery banks and vanish amid the myriad trees, where the intense hush is emphasised rather than broken by rippling stream and fluttering leaf. The white bullocks drawing the red cart beneath interlacing boughs harmonise with the rural loveliness of the forest landscape, and in each green dell and woodland glade ruined temples, kneeling statues, and overthrown columns hallow the wilderness of tropical vegetation with countless memorials of the mysterious past. At the roadside a colossal Buddha, black with age and impressive as the Sphinx, smiles across the endless leagues of forest in the unbroken calm of more than two thousand years. A wreath of faded flowers and some ashes of burnt camphor at the base of the statue show that a native peasant has recently laid his simple offering before the hoary monument, which bears eternal witness to the faith of bygone generations, countless as the leaves whirled away on the breath of the storm. The old religion, though not extinct, has degenerated from the comparative purity of the stream at its source, and at the present time a Buddhist monk, forbidden by the rule of his order to slay even the gnat which stings him, is being tried by the provincial judge for the murder of one of his brethren.

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a forest-clad hill to which Mahindo was traditionally transported through the air. A *Via Sacra* extended hither from Anaradhupura, a distance of eight miles, the road being lined with temples, shrines, and monasteries. The daghoba of Mahintole contains a single hair plucked from the eyebrow of Buddha, and enclosed in a mass of brickwork one hundred feet high. A perilous ledge on the mountain-top is revered as Mahindo's bed; and a large seven-headed cobra carved in the rock, and known as the Snake Bath, marks the site of a sacred fountain. Rock chambers and monastic ruins cover the hill, and the picturesque stairs, which ascend through a grove of ironwood and tamarind-trees, bear numerous inscriptions in Pali and Sanscrit, commemorating supernatural favours experienced by pilgrims to this famous sanctuary. Beyond Mahintole the grey cliffs of Trincomalee stand out in sharp silhouette against the golden afterglow; but the swiftly falling night compels a hasty descent from our airy perch, and, with a hurried glance at the recent excavations below the daghoba, we regain the bullock-cart with frantic speed, rushing through the long grass in terror of possible snakes, forgotten until the guide alarms us with a realistic imitation of the hissing *tic polonga*, in order to quicken loitering footsteps.

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Portuguese invasion. This was succeeded by the Dutch occupation, followed in turn by the French and English rule, the fourfold European race absorbing many of the native characteristics, and gradually welding the mixed nationalities of Ceylon into cohesive form.

On the return journey from Anaradhupura we halt to see the five celebrated rock temples of Dambool, the typical Buddhist sanctuary of Ceylon. Quaint frescoes of religious processions adorn the walls of the principal temple, and long rows of yellow Buddhas, interspersed with coloured figures of ancient Cingalese kings, brighten the dim twilight of the cavernous interior. A recumbent image hewn in the living rock looms in gigantic proportions from the depths of this shadowy crypt, and is repeated in each of the minor temples. Monastic cells perforate the cliffs, and a steep path over slippery sheets of granite affords a final glimpse of the mountains and forests which separate Anaradhupura from the world. The golden light of evening suffuses the sky, and the chirping of the little jungle-birds, those 'clocks of the forest' which for half an hour at dawn and sunset wake the woods with music, now fills the air. Between glossy hedges of coffee a bullock-waggon lumbers heavily along, laden with a gorgeous parasite dreaded here as a noxious weed, but cherished in England as a precious exotic. We utter an involuntary exclamation of horror as the snowy clusters of velvety blossoms, with vivid scarlet hearts, are tossed in huge heaps on the roadside and left to wither in the sun.

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every bough broken off by the wind is borne in solemn procession round the enclosure, and finally cremated with elaborate funeral ceremonies.

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TWILIGHT.

A CLEAR pale sky—serene and autumn-cold ;
Thin floats the buoyant crescent silver keen
Through luminous far-drawn spaces, faintly green
Save for one long, low, lingering streak of gold ;
Blue mists the hushed and supine land enfold,
And dim the winding little river's sheen
Where, darkly clustered, shadowy willows lean,
And chill and heavy lie on plain and wold.
Now as the daylight's eager voices fade
And life is narrowed to a shrinking span,
A twilight breadth of calm and peace and shade,
Now on the hot and restless heart of man,
From individual hopes and fears set free,
A quiet touch from out the unknown is laid—
The thought of compassing Eternity !

A THORN IN THE FLESH.

WHEN the Rev. Stephen Broughton was instituted to the rectory of Holydale we, the souls of his cure, congratulated ourselves upon the fact that Providence seemed at last to have sent us an ideal parish priest. No one quite knew where Mr. Broughton came from, nor what were his antecedents, but it was commonly reported that a rich relation had bought the next presentation of the living for him, and that he himself was blessed with that most excellent thing in a clergyman, 'private means.' The only other fact that was known about him was that he had been *locum tenens* in an out-of-the-way Yorkshire parish for some months before he came to Holydale. But our new Rector was not a man who needed introductions or testimonials, at least not when he had once been seen and heard. His first sermon will long be remembered in the village. He kept the men wide-awake, and he reduced half the women to tears. When we came out we asked one another indignantly what the Government could be thinking about not to have made him a bishop?

It is no exaggeration to say that our new Rector combined the fervid eloquence of a brilliant Irishman with the lucidity and logic of a shrewd and rational Englishman. His views were orthodox, but tempered by such perfect charity that he never gave offence to any section of his congregation. The men liked him because he was practical and large-minded; the women because he gave them emotions. The poor people declared that he 'preached the Gospel,' which meant that, having a sincere and sympathetic temperament, he was enabled to persuade them of the truth of his doctrines, and to play upon their better feelings, as a good musician brings melody out of a long-disused instrument.

Mr. Broughton's oratory was by no means his only recommendation. He was most energetic in house-to-house visitation, had an admirable sick-room manner, seemed really to enjoy teaching in the schools, and lost no time in starting a workman's club, mothers' meetings, classes for adults, and other excellent institutions which Holydale had hitherto lacked, our last pastor having been of the order of King Log.

Mr. Broughton was benevolent of aspect, with an expression of intense spirituality, stooping shoulders, and nearly white hair, though we understood that he was not more than forty-five years old. His fine thin face was worn and deeply-lined, no doubt by much study and constant fasting. Of course the new Rector and his wife formed the chief topic of conversation at all the social gatherings in Holydale for many weeks after their arrival. We—that is, the aristocracy of the parish—were in the habit of dropping in to Dr. Giles's on Sunday afternoons after church, and discussing parish politics and local gossip in his pleasant shady garden. On one of these occasions there was nearly a quarrel between Mrs. Lucas, the solicitor's wife, and the Doctor's little daughter Jenny, who perhaps does express her opinions with overmuch freedom for her seventeen years. Jenny was the only woman in the place who refused to rave about Mr. Broughton.

'I don't know how it is,' she remarked on the occasion in question, at the conclusion of a high-flown eulogium by Mrs. Lucas upon the Rector. 'I really believe Mr. Broughton is a good man, and I am sure he is kind; yet I never like to be near him. I am not even quite happy in the same room with him. I suppose he must be antipathetic to me.'

'How can you let that child talk such nonsense, Doctor?' said Mrs. Lucas, getting quite hot. 'And about an excellent man who is old enough to be her father, too.'

The Doctor laughed. 'I never dare correct Jenny,' he said, 'because I feel that she is young enough to be infallible. You see she judges by instinct, which is such a much more trustworthy guide than reason or experience. Personally, I would not presume to give an opinion on a man's character, any more than I would poke his fire, until I had known him seven years.'

'Are you equally cautious where women are concerned, Doctor?' I asked.

'Oh, I would poke a woman's fire the first time I went into her house,' he replied, 'because I know she could not do it properly for herself. But I would not offer an opinion on her character, even if I had known her seventy times seven years.'

'Talking of women,' put in young Marsden, the Doctor's assistant, 'I wonder why Mrs. Broughton always looks so melancholy. She gives one the idea of a person who has committed the unpardonable sin, and is continually brooding over her prospects of eternal punishment.'

Young Marsden is not a favourite of mine. He is apt to mistake flippancy for wit, and gives himself the airs of a literary character, because he once had an article rejected by the *Spectator*.

'It would be a good thing if some people brooded over their prospects of eternal punishment more frequently and with better cause,' I remarked.

I always feel irresistibly compelled to snub young Marsden, but I am not often quite so severe as that. I thought, however, that he had spoken very improperly of Mrs. Broughton, who was an extremely interesting woman, and would have been an even more attractive one had she been less melancholy in manner and appearance. She always reminded me of a picture I had seen somewhere of a *Mater Dolorosa*, by Carlo Dolce, I think. There was the same mournful droop at the corners of the mouth, and the same brownish-red shadows round the slightly-swollen eyes, that seemed to accentuate the pallor of the rest of the face. On her cheek-bones was that curious glaze which some of the old masters have caught so well, and which is only seen in real life when a woman has eaten the bread of bitterness and watered it with the tears of affliction. Her eyes were of a peculiar shade of grey that looked as if it had once been blue, but had had all the colour washed out by much weeping. She never laughed and seldom even smiled, which was an error of judgment on her part, since she had perfect teeth.

I always felt vaguely sorry for Mrs. Broughton, though it was difficult to see what cause she had for dejection. A good and devoted husband, a lovely little five-year-old daughter, apparently money enough for all reasonable wants, what could a woman desire more? I came to the conclusion at last that she must be naturally of a lachrymose disposition, and that she really enjoyed the 'luxury of woe.' I believe there are some women who would rather forego their afternoon tea than their tears. The poor people adored her, and always described her as 'a lady as *was* a lady.' They are proverbially difficult to please, but her gentle manners, and still more her liberality with her small change, quite won their hearts. Of course she was constantly imposed upon, but most ladies seem to prefer being humbugged to having their eyes opened to the iniquity of the world.

I took a good deal of interest in the family at the rectory, partly because we are next-door neighbours, and partly because I have the misfortune to be churchwarden. I try to get out of it every year,

but as I am supposed to have less to do than any other man in the parish, I am always persuaded into taking the post. After all, it is less trouble for a lazy man to do what he is asked than to refuse and give his reasons why. The office really involves no small responsibility. If the church is not properly warmed, or anything goes wrong with the organ, or the boys behave badly, or the offertories are small, everybody seems to think it is my fault. Still, under the reign of Mr. Broughton, matters worked so smoothly that I had very little trouble. He possessed a positive talent for organisation, and so much tact that he could actually criticise the performance of the choir without giving them offence. The only human weaknesses that he showed during his first summer at Holydale were a slight infirmity of memory, and an occasional absence of mind. Mrs. Broughton explained this by the fact that he had had a severe attack of influenza some months previously, from which he had never entirely recovered. This gave us all an opportunity, of which we were not slow to avail ourselves, of relating our own and our friends' experiences of the fell disease. I told my favourite story of the man who turned bright blue after the influenza. I believe it is perfectly true—at least, I read it in the newspaper.

One Sunday morning the Rector forgot to read the Ten Commandments, and was very penitent in consequence. However, his dearly beloved brethren assured him afterwards that it was really of no importance. If he had forgotten to give out a hymn the choir would have been annoyed, and if he had omitted the sermon we should all have been up in arms, but nobody is very keen about the Ten Commandments on a hot Sunday morning when the church is full of wasps attracted by the hair of the lower classes. After all, the eleventh commandment is the only one that seems to be of much consequence nowadays.

Early in September we had a most unwonted piece of dissipation at Holydale, namely, a grand concert in the reading-room of the workmen's club. The Broughtons undertook the whole trouble of the entertainment, and unlike most affairs of the kind it was a complete success. The room was packed, the piano was in tune, the performers all turned up, and what was even more remarkable, not one of them broke down. In short, the whole thing went off without a hitch. It must have cost the Broughtons a good deal of worry and anxiety, however, for Mrs. Broughton looked even more depressed than usual, and the Rector was

evidently nervous and harassed, for he kept going in and out of the room in a restless manner, while, as the evening wore on, the lines in his face seemed to become deeper, and his voice, when he gave out the names of the pieces, more husky. As soon as 'God save the Queen' had been sung, the people at the bottom of the room began to push aside the benches and make for the door. But when it became apparent that the Rector was going to 'say a few words,' most of the occupants of the front seats remained in their places, though it was difficult to hear much owing to the clatter made by the impatient ones.

With an air and manner of almost portentous solemnity, Mr. Broughton began, in somewhat rambling fashion, to move a vote of thanks to the performers. I was sitting near the platform, so I could hear most of his remarks, and I remember marvelling that such an admirable pulpit orator should make such a poor platform speaker. I seconded the motion, and hoped that was the end of the matter. But the Rector had not done with us yet. He proceeded to apologise for not having himself contributed anything towards the evening's entertainment, and then told us an anecdote about the first and last time that he appeared as a singer, which was in his college days. It was rather a funny story, as far as I could hear, and when it came to an end a few members of the audience laughed and applauded. The speaker stopped short and smiled. It was a curiously sudden and uncontrolled smile compared with the abnormal gravity of the expression that had preceded it. Then, to my astonishment, he began to tell the same story over again in precisely the same words. The sound of scraping benches and clumping boots ceased, and a sudden silence fell on the room. I fancy that the general idea was that the Rector intended to be very funny, though it was difficult to see where the joke came in. He had only uttered a few sentences, however, when I noticed Mrs. Broughton whisper something to her little girl Brenda. The child at once slipped off her chair, clambered on the platform, and taking hold of her father's hand, said softly:

'Father, I'm so sleepy; I want to go to bed.'

The Rector's manner changed instantly.

'So you shall, my darling; so you shall,' he exclaimed, as he caught up the child in his arms and kissed her. It was a pretty act, and so spontaneously done that I was not surprised to hear some subdued applause, or to notice that the eyes of some of the

women grew moist at the sight of that benevolent figure with the grey head bent so tenderly over the child's golden hair. I glanced at the little girl as her father set her down, and was rather taken aback to see her shudder slightly, and to mark an expression of passive endurance upon her small face. This child was an enigma to me. I can generally get on with young things, but my blandishments always seemed thrown away upon Brenda. True, she received my attentions with perfect civility, but I could seldom succeed in waking one of those dimples that sleep in all childish cheeks. She gave one the impression that she had been born with a knowledge of good and evil, and all the tragic mysteries of life and death. However, thanks to Brenda, we had no more speech-making that evening, and for a week afterwards everybody one met was full of the praises of the entertainment.

It must have been about this time that I involuntarily overheard something which gave me only too good reason to suspect that the domestic life at the rectory was not quite so harmonious and unclouded as it appeared upon the surface. I must explain that the rectory garden is only divided from mine by a paling, which, on my side, is bordered by a nut-walk. Here there is a small arbour, where I sometimes sit and smoke an after-dinner pipe. One warm September evening I was sitting in this arbour when I heard the sound of steps coming down the path on the other side of the paling. They were slow and rather heavy steps. 'The Rector,' I said to myself, and I was just going to get up and wish him 'Good-evening,' when I heard other steps, light, rapid ones this time, hurrying along the path.

'Stephen,' said Mrs. Broughton's voice in curiously vibrating tones, 'Stephen, where are you going?'

'To the reading-room, my dear,' replied the Rector's voice, which sounded, as it often did, rather husky.

'Oh, not to-night,' pleaded his wife. Stop at home to-night; Brenda wants you to hear her say her hymn. You are tired and poorly, and,' here her voice faltered, 'remember Jack Denver is always there, and others like him. Don't go to-night.'

I felt myself placed in rather an awkward position. I had no desire to overhear what was not meant for me, but under the circumstances it would be rather embarrassing for my neighbours as well as myself if I were to reveal my presence. I was hesitating whether to cough, or to get up and walk away, when the Rector replied in somewhat pompous style—

'My dear, I am at a loss to know what you mean by speaking to me in this way. Pray what harm can a man like Jack Denver do me, even though he is a socialist and a dissenter? You really seem to think I am not capable of taking care of myself. I am perfectly well, though perhaps a little tired, and unable to stand much worry.'

'Oh, Stephen!' said the woman, and I could hear from her voice that she was crying, which made me feel very uncomfortable. Old bachelors never can bear to hear a woman cry; I suppose married men get used to it. 'Oh, Stephen!' she went on, 'I can't help it; don't be angry with me. Think of all we have gone through together; think of the child. And now when everything looks so bright, when we seem to have a chance of happiness, now to——' Her voice broke, and there was a moment's silence. Then the Rector spoke in tones out of which all the pompousness had gone, though the huskiness remained.

'I know, I know,' he said piteously. 'I am a weak miserable wretch, and I have spoilt your life. But I promise you, Elizabeth, I swear before God that I will never——'

He stopped suddenly, and I guessed that a hand had been placed over his mouth.

'Don't swear—don't swear,' moaned his wife. 'Come back to the house and lie down. You are over-tired and nervous this evening.'

He made no further resistance, and the footsteps retreated in the direction of the house. I had sat on thorns during the latter part of this colloquy, scarcely daring to breathe, lest my presence should be discovered. I mentally inveighed against the incredible stupidity of people who come and make scenes in their gardens, when they cannot possibly tell who may be the other side of the paling. We know that walls have ears, but little birds are much more dangerous auditors. I determined, of course, to keep what I had heard strictly to myself. It is always a mistake to repeat anything in a country village, but people will do it, because there is nothing else to do.

From that day forward I naturally felt uneasy about the family at the rectory, though for some time nothing occurred to confirm any suspicions I might have formed. The parochial organisation continued to work with miraculous smoothness, and the Broughtons gained, day by day, fresh popularity with all classes. Though they lived very quietly they always seemed able and willing to

relieve such of their neighbours as were afflicted in body or estate. They seemed to have no desire or object in life beyond the welfare of the parish. One never met the Rector without a little following of children at his heels, looking up expectantly for the pennies of which he seemed to have an inexhaustible supply. People were fond of comparing him to the Vicar of Wakefield, and, indeed, as regards unworldliness, benevolence, and perfect charity, he seemed not far behind Dr. Primrose. It was only too clear, however, that our pastor was overtaxing his strength. He aged rapidly in appearance, and was at times curiously inconsequent, while his memory became more defective. But these slight infirmities were readily forgiven him for the sake of his practical piety, no less than for the eloquence that held us all entranced.

Early in November, however, an incident occurred which caused me a return of uneasiness, and, in fact, made me feel as if we were living on a volcano, which might at any moment become unpleasantly active. I must explain that we have a little whist-club in the village, the members of which meet once a week at one another's houses during the winter. On the occasion in question, we had spent the evening at the Lucas's. No irrelevant conversation is allowed during the rubbers, but over the sandwiches and marsala, with which we usually conclude the evening, I remember that Mrs. Lucas waxed eloquent on the subject of the manifold perfections of our spiritual pastor.

'Have you heard the latest about dear Mr. Broughton?' she inquired of the company generally. 'Yesterday he found old James Lincoln digging over his bit of garden, and groaning because his back was so bad with rheumatism. Well, the Rector, who is far from strong, as I always tell Mrs. Broughton, took the old man's spade, and dug over the whole of the garden with his own hands? What do you think of that?'

'A most practical argument against disestablishment,' remarked her husband, who seldom lost an opportunity of throwing cold water upon his wife's rhapsodies.

'And it was the back-garden,' continued the lady. 'No one would have known if James Lincoln hadn't mentioned it. And he wasn't a bit grateful, but thought "Parson might have given him something to plant it with." Then, only the other day, Mr. Broughton saw Widow Martin toiling home with her parish allowance, a stone of flour. She is lame, you know, so she can't get along very fast. Well, he insisted on carrying the sack, and,

besides, gave her his arm all the way home. And she is not at all a clean-looking old woman.'

'Let us hope they met a dissenter,' observed the Doctor; then added, half-unwillingly: 'All the same, I acquit the Rector of any desire to be ostentatious. I happen to know that your hero's acts of kindness are too many to be hid under a bushel.'

My way home from the Lucas's house lay past the church. I was surprised, considering it was already eleven o'clock, to see a faint glimmer of light issuing from the chancel windows. Thinking that a lantern must have been left in the church by accident, I went up to the chancel door, and found that it was ajar. I pushed it noiselessly open, and peeped round the felt curtain that hung in front of it. By the dim light of a small lantern that stood on one of the window-sills, I perceived that a man was lying upon the altar-steps. His face was hidden on his arms; but I recognised the fine head, and the long grey hair that reached almost to the bowed shoulders. It was the Rector. He had not heard me come in, and, all unconscious of any human ear, was praying aloud with a self-abandonment that is only possible under conditions of the profoundest mental agony.

'Oh, my God,' I heard him moan, 'is there no help in heaven, no hope upon earth? Oh, let this temptation pass from me, for it is heavier than I can bear. Grant me strength in my weakness, O Lord, for I have no power of myself to help myself.'

These words, adapted no doubt unconsciously from the Book he knew so well, were followed by a paroxysm of weeping so despairing and so heartrending that it seemed to turn the blood in my veins to cold water. I hastily retreated, and drew the door gently to behind me. I went home and pondered over the scene I had just witnessed. It was clear that the sooner Mrs. Broughton took her husband away for a much-needed holiday the better, and I decided that I would speak to her about it myself at the earliest opportunity. I was strengthened in this decision by the fact, which came to my ears for the first time, that there was already what Holydale people vaguely but expressively term 'talk' about the family at the rectory. Of course, 'talk' is never anything very pleasant or agreeable, or to the credit of the persons talked about. The Rector's popularity was far too genuine with both rich and poor to be easily talked away, but it is only natural that the dissenters should seize any and every opportunity of throwing a little mud at the much-hated, deeply-envied 'cloth.'

I timed my next visit to Mrs. Broughton at an hour when I knew her husband was always engaged at the school. She was not a woman whom it was easy to hint things to, for she seemed of late to have acquired a habit of standing on the defensive. However, I ventured to suggest that the Rector had been looking poorly of late, and I was afraid his devotion to his work was proving too much for him. Would not a holiday and thorough change be likely to prove beneficial?

'Yes, you are quite right,' Mrs. Broughton had replied. 'I have been trying to persuade my husband for some time past to take a holiday. But, you see, there are many difficulties in the way. It is no light matter to find a *locum tenens* who can carry on the work satisfactorily, even for a short time. But a more insuperable obstacle to our leaving just now is the condition of poor Ellen Bartram. You know she has lately come home from London in a rapid decline. It appears she has not led a very good life, and the poor girl has a mortal terror of death. When she is at her worst my husband is the only person who can soothe her, or induce her to take any comfort in the promises of Scripture. He goes to see her every day, and I am sure he will not leave the place till her sufferings are over. It cannot be long, and then I shall persuade him to go to the sea. He really ought to see a nerve specialist; his nervous system was quite shattered by that dreadful influenza.'

She held up her head and looked me straight in the face with her candid eyes, in a manner that was superb in its audacity. I have always noticed that when really truthful sincere persons feel themselves compelled to lie, they do it much more successfully than the habitually untruthful, who fritter away their inventive powers upon the small matters of daily life.

In answer to Mrs. Broughton's remarks I feebly murmured that I had always heard electricity was good for the nerves, and then the subject dropped. I had long ceased to wonder at the glaze upon my hostess's cheeks, or at the Carlo Dolce shadows round the grey eyes that should have been blue.

Winter came early that year, and before the end of November the whole country was seized in the iron grasp of a black wind-frost. The flickering life-flames of the old and the sick were blown out by the first breath of the inexorable north-easter. About ten days after my interview with Mrs. Broughton I heard with much relief that one of the obstacles that prevented the

Rector from leaving Holydale had been removed. Ellen Bartram, in spite of her terror of death—or rather of judgment, and her frantic clinging to life—had gone out, though not, unfortunately for her, like the snuff of a candle. There had been a painful scene at the end, a ‘hard death’ as the poor people said with genuine sympathy, tempered by undisguised pleasure in all the ghastly details. The Rector had knelt by the girl’s bedside all through the long night, soothing her fears, and supporting her with the consolations of Scripture and the promises of mercy held out to penitent sinners, until, with the first glimmer of the cold winter dawn, the terrified spirit at length took its flight ‘for worlds unknown,’ and the agonised struggling body was at rest. It was reported that the Rector, who was quite broken down and worn out by the horror of the scene, had engaged a clerical friend to take the duty for some weeks, and would leave in the course of the next few days for Bournemouth.

The night before the intended departure of my neighbours was one of the coldest of the whole year. I found it almost impossible to keep warm in my study, with the shutters closed, the curtains drawn, and a fire of pine-logs. My fox-terrier, Rip, kept getting into the fender, and tried hard to go to sleep there, but at the end of three minutes was always compelled to go to the other end of the room and gasp. This proceeding he repeated at short intervals throughout the evening. I must have been reading an interesting book, though I have not an idea what it was about, for twelve o’clock found me still in my arm-chair. I had just made up my mind to finish the volume, of which I had only a few pages left, when I was startled by a sudden rapping upon the window, an urgent, impatient rapping.

‘Who is it?’ I called; ‘what is the matter?’

The rapping grew louder and more urgent.

‘Oh, let us in!’ cried a woman’s voice in piteous accents. ‘For God’s sake, open the window and let us in!’

I did not recognise the voice, but I could not resist the appeal. I hurried to the window, threw back the shutters, and admitted—Mrs. Broughton and her child. It was Mrs. Broughton, though not the quiet, proud, self-contained woman I had hitherto known. There are moments, I suppose, in the lives of each one of us, when the outward garb of custom and conventionality is thrown aside, when even the question of sex disappears, and we stand spiritually naked, but not ashamed.

For the moment Mrs. Broughton had dropped the mask of polite disguises, and as she gazed with tragic eyes into my face, she was no longer the Rector's wife, no longer the well-bred gentlewoman—she was merely a frightened, desperate human being.

‘He wanted to kill me,’ she gasped, ‘and he said he would kill the child. But we got away while he was looking for his razor. He may be taking his own life at this moment. Oh! go to him—why do you stop here? You can get in through the drawing-room window.’

She paused, panting for breath. It has often been observed that at a time of great mental excitement we are peculiarly apt to notice trivial external details. While Mrs. Broughton was speaking, I observed that she had only a fur cloak thrown over her night-dress, and loose slippers on her bare feet. Her brown hair hung in a thick plait down her back, and a few strands straggled over her forehead. I could never have imagined Mrs. Broughton with untidy hair if my own eyes had not borne witness to the fact. The child was warmly bundled up in shawls and a blanket. The little thing was not crying, but gazed at me calmly from under her straight brows, and appeared as philosophically resigned as if she were in the habit, like a childish ghost, of taking her walks abroad at midnight.

‘Go to the fire and get warm,’ I said to Mrs. Broughton, ‘and put the child to bed on the sofa. I will go to your husband directly I have sent a note to Dr. Giles. Wait here till I return.’

I hastily scribbled a line, roused my man, and sent him off for the doctor, who lived not a stone's-throw away. Then, providing to a certain extent against emergencies by arming myself with a loaded stick, I entered the rectory garden, and made my way to the drawing-room window. I mentally vowed that if I got safely out of this scrape, I would never, never again be deluded into undertaking the churchwardenship as long as I lived. It really requires no small courage for a stout, harmless, elderly gentleman to enter a room containing a man who is, to all intents and purposes, a maniac with homicidal tendencies. As I passed up the stairs I could hear strange sounds from the direction of the Rector's bedroom. A door in the passage flew suddenly open, giving me a fearful start, and a woman's head tied up in red flannel was protruded.

‘Oh, sir,’ said the head, ‘thank goodness you're come. Whatever is the matter, and what is master making such a dreadful noise about?’

'Hold your tongue, and go to bed,' I answered, in a more savage tone than I ever thought to use to a woman. 'Your master is not well.'

I passed on to the Rector's door, which was partly open. A lamp stood on a side-table, and I could discern a figure crouching down in the darkest corner of the room, a figure that moaned and mouthed and gesticulated. I had heard that in such a case one should control the patient by the power of the eye. But it is difficult to feel much faith in the power of an eye that one knows to be small and twinkling, and ornamented with sandy eyelashes. However, eyes or no eyes, my spiritual pastor seemed even more alarmed at my appearance than I was at his.

'It is Beelzebub,' he exclaimed in excited tones. 'The God of Flies, the Father of Lies! Which is it? The room is full of them. Lies, flies—they are blinding me, choking me, stifling me—'

He broke off suddenly, put his hands over his face, and cowered down in abject terror. He remained thus for a few moments, then, looking up, said in calmer tones—

'What are those creatures coming down the chimney, and in at the window, and under the door? Ah, I know them; they are the beasts that came up out of the bottomless pit. Yes, it is all true; there are the locusts that have faces as the faces of men, and hair as the hair of women, and tails like unto scorpions, and there are stings in their tails. Don't let them come near me,' he exclaimed, beginning to tremble again. 'Keep them away, I say. Don't you see that one with a sword in his mouth? Ah, they are coming nearer—they are closing round me. I have never harmed a living soul, nor turned away from a brother in distress; is there no mercy for me? I tell you the poison was in my blood, for when the fathers have eaten sour grapes the children's teeth are set on edge.'

At this moment I was relieved to hear a step upon the stair. The man in the corner heard it too, for he sprang to his feet, exclaiming—

'He is coming, he is coming! It is the Prince of Darkness! He will bind me hand and foot and cast me into outer darkness, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.'

On the last word his voice rose to an unearthly shriek. Before I could stop him, or even guess his intention, he bounded across the room and flung himself with all his force against the closed window. Both glass and woodwork gave way before his frenzied

force like wet paper. There was a blast of icy air, a moment of silent sickening suspense, then a dull thud on the frost-bound earth below. At the same instant the Doctor entered the room.

'Where is he?' he asked, glancing round.

For all answer I pointed silently to the wrecked window. I had often heard that medical men were callous, but I never knew how callous Dr. Giles could be until that awful night. He walked to the window, and looked out into the moonlight.

'I should judge, from the position in which he is lying, that he has broken his neck,' he remarked coolly. 'The best thing the poor fellow could possibly have done.'

He turned and went down the stairs, while I followed as quickly as I could upon a pair of very shaky legs. The Doctor's diagnosis, made from an upper window, proved to be correct. We carried what had been the Rector up to his room, and laid it upon his bed. Then the Doctor closed the staring eyes, and bound up the dropped jaw with a touch more gentle than his words. The horror that a few moments before had distorted the features had already given way to an expression of peace. The dead clay seemed to have regained all its natural grandeur as soon as it was freed from the spirit that had tortured, degraded, and destroyed it.

'He was a good man,' I said regretfully, as I touched the still warm hand for the last time.

Somewhat to my surprise the Doctor agreed with me.

'Yes,' he said emphatically. 'I do believe him to have been a good man. Probably I know more of him and his work than anyone else in Holydale. He and I have met in many a sick-room, and have shared the watch beside more than one dying bed. I tell you this man was a Christian, who, as far as in him lay, lived up to his faith. The poor and the sick and the sorrowful have this night lost not only their priest but their friend. In spite of his weakness he has taught me more respect for his order, and strengthened my belief in humanity.'

'But if that is your feeling about him,' I said, 'how is it that you show neither grief nor horror at his tragic end?'

'Because Fate was against him. Had he been the victim of any other incurable disease, such as consumption, cancer, or even leprosy, we should not have refused him our pity, and we should surely have respected his sufferings. As it was—well, he has done the best he could, both for himself and others. He could not conquer Fate.'

CHARACTER NOTE.

THE OLD SCHOOL.

My Lady is seventy years old. My Lady is little and stout, with very white hair, very blue eyes, and a soft colour on her cheeks, like a girl's. She is the widow of a knighted alderman—has been a widow, perhaps, twenty years—and is still faithful to the smallest and most unreasonable of the wishes he left behind him.

My Lady is not at all up to date. She was a girl at the time when the young person worked samplers and copied out recipes. There is a picture of her taken at this interesting period, on a cabinet in the drawing-room, at eighteen years old, with a waist scarcely so many inches round, sandal shoes, curls, and soft shoulders peeping above her frock.

She has remained all her life quite simple, narrow, and old-fashioned. If she is proud of anything, it is of her knowledge of a culinary mystery called stock. She can, and does, repeat by heart twenty-three different methods of dressing calves' head. She trots—a stout trot now, but still an active one—in and out of her kitchen. If her servants did not love her—which by reason of her sweet goodness they cannot help doing—they would hate her indeed. My Lady's blue eyes are quick to perceive a domestic neglect or oversight. She dusts her priceless china—stored away in the most barbarous of cabinets—with her own hands, which are very plump, little, and delicate. She likewise attends herself to the well-being of those waxen roses and camellias which she modelled in the early days of her marriage, and which have been since religiously preserved under glass shades, and are a memory of that dead art called the *Elegant Accomplishment*.

My Lady's household is hedged about with immemorial rules and customs. The drawing-room curtains, of a massive damask, are nightly rolled up, and, as it were, put to bed. Sunday would seem secular indeed unless there were kidneys for breakfast and dinner at five. On Sunday evenings, too, My Lady in her old voice sings hymns to herself at the grand piano. She has been known, in her simple faltering tones, to take the 'Hallelujah Chorus' as a solo. She plays instrumental music softly to herself

in the firelight, being quite undaunted by the fact that she is too stout to cross one hand over the other when the music so requires.

My Lady has a great many visitors—modern, enlightened visitors, in the shape of great nieces and nephews for the most part—who find the house an exceedingly trying one to stay in, and are yet perpetually staying in it. There is a brown sweetness about the sherry and a solemn heaviness about the port which has nearly—but not quite—turned them into teetotallers. One of them, who is entirely pert and up to date, finds it necessary to bury her fashionable head deep in the sofa cushion during family prayers.

‘Auntie, you know,’ says Up to Date, ‘can’t have the ghost of a sense of humour. Who ever heard of thanking Providence for balmy air with the thermometer at zero, and praying for the children of the household when there aren’t any?’

It is very likely true that My Lady’s sense of the ridiculous is not very keen. She reads a portion of Scripture nightly—preferably some portion particularly unsuited for the edification of a family—with her sweet face very grave, tender, and good. Perhaps she thinks—who knows? so many of My Lady’s ideas are effete and exploded—that because the Bible is the Bible there can be no part of it not fit, suitable, and ennobling; or perhaps her gentle soul is so near heaven that it can be lifted there even by an historical narrative or an illogical petition.

Up to Date is further aggravated by My Lady’s charities. My Lady is wealthy—or would be wealthy if the world were not so full of trouble, sickness, and, alas! mendicity. Her relatives say that she is horribly cheated. They may be right. She tries to be just. She does not spare herself trouble to find out if her pensioners are deserving. She toils asthmatically up flights of stairs to see them. All the morning long she writes letters to get persons into hospitals or asylums or homes. It is said that the letters are not very well worded, and are even confusingly expressed. The aspiring young lady of the Board School has, in fact, received a far better education in such matters than My Lady, whose highest literary endeavour is a daily reading of the ‘Times,’ in accordance with the desire of the late alderman.

My Lady, who thinks only of others, is herself thought for by her maid—a maid who is roughly estimated to be about seventy-six, and who has been in My Lady’s service since she was seventeen. Anna, who wears three tight curls on each side of her face,

which the most vivid imagination cannot suppose to have ever been beautiful, pours into My Lady's glass, with a shaking old hand, the proper quantity of whisky ordered by the doctor. 'Lor', mum,' says Anna, 'you're none so young, and must do as you're told.' Likewise, if My Lady does not eat what Anna esteems a sufficient quantity, Anna is quite angry, trembling and upset for the rest of the day. Anna helps My Lady to dress in the morning, and My Lady kisses her when they say 'Good-night.'

But the great love of My Lady's heart goes out to her nephew. Why, God knows. Unless she fancies in her tender soul that the baby who lay forty years ago for one brief day upon her breast might have been, if he had lived, just such a fine, strong, handsome fellow.

Phil breaks into My Lady's solemn dining-room where she sits at her orderly luncheon or dinner. Phil has an insolent swagger about him which he mistakes—and other people mistake, My Lady among them—for *bonne camaraderie* and frankness. Phil leaves traces of his muddy boots upon My Lady's immaculate carpets. When he talks to her—a familiar parlance in which he usually addresses her as 'Old Sally'—he beats the dust out of his riding-breeches with his crop. My Lady listens to his hunting stories, of which she understands, perhaps, scarcely a single word, with the simplest and most attentive interest, and with a tender little smile on her old face. Some of his anecdotes bring a little blush into her cheeks; and when he damns his friends, his luck, or whatever seems to him to stand in most need of condemnation, My Lady says 'Hush, Phil,' quite sternly, and forgives him at once. My Lady forgives worse than that. When Phil is discovered, *flagrante delicto*, embracing a housemaid, and defends himself by saying 'Confound it, old lady, there's no harm in *that*,' My Lady dismisses the housemaid with a stern reproof, and Phil comes to dinner, as usual, the next week. Phil, moreover, has debts which he takes his oath, old woman, he can't tell how he incurred. If he went down on his knees to her and was abject, suppliant, and repentant, My Lady might think twice before she paid them. But she mistakes—she is not the first—insolence, swagger, and bravado for openness, honesty, and that particularly indefinite quality which is called a good heart. Phil shouts rollicking hunting songs in the prim drawing-room, and My Lady anxiously hastens her accompaniment to keep time with him.

She sometimes tries herself a verse or two of the comic melody he is learning. My Lady, stout and innocent, singing the last slang of a music-hall in her pretty old voice, with her tender, simple face bent seriously over the music, has an effect strangely incongruous and odd, and Phil says 'Old Sally's going it! Sally's game, and no mistake.' And My Lady says, 'No bad words, Phil,' which amuses Phil stupendously, and continues as before.

Phil, upon his oath as usual, assures My Lady one day in the course of conversation that he is an excellent man of business. My Lady says 'Are you, dear?' quite simply. She is making tea in the drawing-room after dinner—a tea with a pretty accompaniment of old china and the most solid and massive of silver.

'Yes, by George!' says Phil, who has stretched himself upon the sofa, where he is kicking about, unreprieved, My Lady's best worsted-work cushions. 'I could take a lot of trouble off your hands, old woman, if you'd like me to.'

My Lady will think about it. She knows very little about money matters, the alderman having arranged all those things for her. But she does think about it, and Phil, who is nothing if not good-natured, takes the trouble off her hands without a murmur. Three months later he takes off himself and thirty thousand pounds to South America. The lawyer whose duty it is to inform My Lady of her ruin is surprised at the old woman's courage and composure. The colour fades, indeed, out of her cheeks, but her voice is quite firm and dignified, and she makes arrangements for the future with a clearness and conciseness of which in her prosperity she was incapable. When Anna is told the pitiful story, and puts her tender, feeble arms round My Lady's neck and cries, My Lady's own eyes are quite dry.

'Master Phil!' says Anna, with her curls shaking, 'as was such a fine baby and all! Master Phil!' But My Lady says nothing. All that morning she sits at her writing-desk as usual, and writes for many hours. She has to tell innumerable charities that their faithful subscriber, who has taken their emotional appeals *au pied de la lettre*, and believed that every fresh charity is, as it declares itself, the most deserving in all London, must be faithless to them at last. She writes also to many needy curates, distressed gentlewomen, and reclaimed inebriates, whom she has supported or helped. With what pangs in her kindly and trusting heart who knows? Later is found among her papers the

rough draft of a letter in which she begs humbly the charity of a rich relative for the most necessitous of such cases. On another paper she has drawn up a system of expenditure, full of details the most practical and domestic, for herself and a reduced household, which may still leave her something to give away. After luncheon, at which Anna sheds tears into the vegetable dishes, and kisses My Lady spasmodically, My Lady interviews the other servants. The gardener, who has loved and cheated his mistress for forty years, and is a person of plain and familiar speech, tells her that she may give him warning if she likes, but that leave her service he can't and won't. The old coachman, who has lorded it over My Lady from the coachbox since he was one-and-twenty, and has never permitted her to use the unwieldy carriage-horses more than twice a week, inquires laconically, 'Wot's wages?' and announces that 'osses or no 'osses he is going to stick by My Lady. The cook—an emotional thing of five-and-forty—bursts into fat tears, and for the first time My Lady's blue eyes are momentarily wet.

'You have all,' she says gently, 'been very good to me, and I thank you from my heart.'

Then they leave her alone. What thoughts keep her company in that long twilight, none know. She has been rich for seventy years, and is poor. She has lost affluence, which is bitter perhaps, and an ideal, which has the bitterness of death. She looks long at a picture of Phil which stands on her table—Phil as a boy at school, bold, handsome, and daring—and she kisses him with pale lips. It is a farewell. Phil has died to her for ever.

Anna dresses her as usual that night for dinner. My Lady, with her sweet face framed in the soft frills of the widow's cap—which she still wears in tender memory of the alderman—reads the 'Times' as usual by the lamplight in the drawing-room afterwards. She plays a little on the piano. There are some of Phil's songs lying among her music. She puts them away, with fingers that scarcely tremble, in a portfolio by themselves. It is like a burial.

Anna brings in the tea at nine. My Lady makes it with her usual dainty precision. The emotional cook has evinced her sympathy by toasting an especially fascinating muffin. My Lady looks up at Anna with a little smile, and says she must not hurt cook's feelings by leaving it. Almost as she says the words Anna startles the house with a cry. My Lady has had a paralytic stroke.

Through a wider and wiser mercy than any which is of this world, My Lady never recovers her memory. Sometimes she fancies herself a girl again, white-frocked, auburn-haired, like her picture in the drawing-room. At others she sends messages to the kitchen *à propos* of the alderman's birthday dinner. Is vaguely troubled, perhaps, for a moment that he does not come to her, and the next, has forgotten him altogether. Once Anna, stooping over her bed, hears her breathe Phil's fatal name softly to herself. But My Lady's face is more tranquil than summer starlight, and from her broken words it is gathered that she has confused, in some God-given confusion, the living sinner with the dead baby of five-and-forty years ago. And she dies with Phil's name and a smile together upon her lips.

THE MODEST SCORPION.

YOU may perhaps have noticed that whenever any peculiarly atrocious and cold-blooded murderer has been duly found guilty by a jury of his peers, and is about to be hanged, as he richly deserves, in expiation of his offences, an immense number of his humane and sympathetic fellow-citizens are always ready to come forward and testify to his many excellent moral qualities, or to declare that, if he really did commit the murder of which he has been convicted, he must at least have done it in a moment of temporary forgetfulness, which he would be the first to regret in his calmer periods of self-possession. Well, that is somewhat the sort of kind office I want to perform to-day for the much-abused and profoundly misunderstood scorpion. I will admit at once, to be sure, that the defendant for whom I hold a brief in this article doesn't by any means come into court with clean hands, nor do I expect that he will leave it in the end 'without a stain on his character.' But I do assert, nevertheless, that my unhappy client, instead of being, as everybody who doesn't intimately know him imagines, of a peculiarly aggressive and quarrelsome turn of mind, is in reality a quiet and retiring private gentleman, who only wants to be left alone; one whose first idea it is, when strangers rudely disturb him in the privacy of his own quarters, to run away and hide until they have disappeared—most certainly never to inflict himself voluntarily upon anyone who is inclined to prefer his room to his company.

How does it come, then, you may ask, that so modest and retiring a disposition should so often have been mistaken for quarrelsomeness and ill-temper? Why, simply thus, as I understand the matter. Ill-advised people have long been in the habit of sitting down upon scorpions, or otherwise provoking them by violent and injudicious personal interferences; and the scorpions, thus attacked, have not unnaturally retaliated, as is their wont, by instant reprisals. Most people lose their tempers if you sit upon them; and it isn't reasonable to expect scorpions to show greater forbearance. But that doesn't prove them to be aggressive or acrimonious. Now a wasp, if you like, is an ill-tempered animal. He flies in your face, unprovoked, and then proceeds to sting you for no better reason

than because he hadn't the sense to look where he was going himself, and so to avoid running up against you needlessly. Such conduct, I grant you, is really reprehensible; whereas, the inoffensive scorpion, unless attacked, never attempts to do any spontaneous harm to anybody; and I speak from experience in this matter, having known him intimately in many of his varieties in Europe, Africa, and the American tropics, ever since I began to pay any attention at all to the animal creation. I may add, indeed, that after many years' residence in scorpion-haunted countries, I have never personally known of more than one case of an actual scorpion sting, and that one case happened to my negro 'house-cleaner' years ago in Jamaica. She incautiously put her hand down on the exact point in space then and there occupied by a large black scorpion, the consequence being that the previous occupier very naturally stung her. It was merely done by way of compensation for disturbance.

Scorpions, to say the truth, are by nature retiring animals that shun the light, no doubt on the very sufficient ground that their deeds are evil. As a class, they conceal themselves during the day under stones and logs, or in crevices of buildings. If you lift the stone beneath whose shelter they live, their first and only idea seems to be to run away and hide themselves as quickly as possible. Of course, if you obstruct their retreat, they will try to sting you; and if you have employed your finger as a suitable instrument for obstruction, they will, no doubt, succeed in impressing you at once with a strong consciousness of the extreme unwisdom of your hasty action. But if you leave them alone, and allow them to scuttle off to their holes or retreats, unmolested, in their own fashion, they will repay the compliment by leaving you alone in turn and taking no further notice of your presence in any way.

The fact is, your scorpion is a timid nocturnal animal, who only ventures out after dark on the hunt for prey, and is as frightened in the daytime as a bat or an owl found prowling about in the light at unaccustomed hours. Like many other beasts of prey, he prefers to take his quarry unawares in their sleep—an unsportsmanlike and extremely unfair proceeding if you will, but certainly not one that marks an aggressive or unduly savage and bellicose nature. The real difficulty, I have always found, is not to avoid but to catch your scorpion, for the moment he is disturbed he scuttles away so fast, in his vulgar anxiety to save his own bacon,

without the faintest regard for the interests of science, that if you don't grip him quickly with a pair of stout pincers, and hold him fast when caught, he has disappeared into space, down his hole or burrow, like a streak of lightning, before you've had time to add him to the specimens in your collecting-bottle. He seems to entertain a rooted objection, indeed, to spirits of wine, and to prefer the obscurity of his native hillside to all the posthumous glories of Westminster Abbey, or its practical insect equivalent, the Natural History Museum. A very mean-spirited and unambitious reptile!

I hasten, however, to add, in a hurried parenthesis, before my familiar old enemies Dryasdust and Smellfungus have time to drop down upon me, that I use the last word on this occasion in its popular and unscientific sense only. Biologically speaking, of course, a scorpion is *not* a reptile; nor is it an insect either. It is a homeless nondescript. It belongs, in fact, to no popularly recognised division of the animal kingdom, being just one of those poor waifs and strays of biological society that fall everywhere between two stools, and are commonly described as neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring. Scientifically it is regarded as an arachnid, but not as an araneid—a spider-kind, in other words, though not a thorough-going spider; which is one of those delicate distinctions that, as Mr. Silas Wegg observed, 'had better be discussed in the absence of Mrs. Boffin.' It agrees with the spiders in having eight legs, while all true insects have only six, and also in several interesting points of internal structure which I generously refrain from inflicting in full upon the reader's ears, on the general ground that they can only be adequately described in the scientific variety of the Latin language. If I am strong, I am merciful. Details about maxillæ and trochanters and didactyle chelæ are apt to pall after a time on the general reader; nor does he show that burning anxiety which, no doubt, he ought to do as to the precise distinction between the cephalothorax and the abdomen, or the falces and the antennæ. Out of consideration for his feelings, therefore, and for the purity of the English language, I propose to discourse of scorpions in the mother tongue alone, without any digression into the learned labyrinth of arthropod terminology. I merely put in the last two words, indeed, as explanatory examples, just to show you what I *could* do in that way if I were so minded.

The scorpion, however, though not quite a true spider, is a

very old and respectable member of the ancient and distinguished family to which he belongs. We sometimes talk in our conceited human way of 'the Antiquity of Man;' but man is indeed the veriest mushroom of yesterday on the face of the globe by the side of the immemorial and primæval scorpion. Our boldest investigators have never yet dared to push the advent of humanity on the globe one day further back than the Miocene period—and even that is to most men of science a startling heresy. But the Miocene comes only in the middle place of the tertiary age of geology; and before the tertiary, of course, came the vastly longer secondary age; and before the secondary again, the still longer and immeasurably remote primary epoch. Well, the coal-measures belong to the primary formation; and already in the coal-measures, both in Europe and America, we find the skeleton shapes of ancestral scorpions—not mere vague and uncertain scorpion-like creatures, mark you well, but genuine unadulterated when-you-ask-for-them-see-that-you-get-them scorpions of the purest water. After the coal-measures, once more, come the Permian deposits; and then the whole range of the softer secondaries, from the Devonshire red sandstone, through the lias and the oolite, to the green sand and chalk that form the Surrey hills and the undulating downs of Kent and Sussex. And after those, again, in younger order, come the whole series of the tertiaries of Eastern England. Yet, as long ago as those immensely remote coal-measures, whose distance in time can hardly be meted by millions of years, there were already scorpions, with stings in their tails and pincers on their claws, and everything else that goes to make up the picture of the perfect ideal scorpion, just as good (or as bad, if you prefer to put it so) as at the present moment. So early did the type arrive at the actual summit of scorpoid excellence, and so soon did the young world learn from bitter experience that it couldn't manage to do without stinging reptiles.

There are spiders as well as scorpions in those same ancient coal-measures; and this is an important fact (though a careless world may feel inclined to make little of it), because it shows that even at that remote date the family of the arachnids had already split up into the two great branches to which most of its members still belong. But of these two great branches, the scorpions, I should be strongly inclined to say, most nearly represent the elder division of the family. I will even venture to tell you the

reason why. The primitive ancestor of both branches—the hypothetical ‘father of all spiders,’ as Orientals would call him—must almost certainly have been a marine animal, a jointed crustacean, more or less resembling in outer form the crayfishes, crabs, and lobsters of our modern oceans. Indeed, the horseshoe-crabs of America, and the king-crabs of the China seas, which are well-known objects in most marine aquariums, have been shown by Professor Ray Lankester to be surviving representatives of this now almost extinct half-crustacean group of ancestral scorpion-spiders. But this hypothetical early progenitor of both divisions must certainly have been a jointed creature, with all the segments of his body equally made up of separate pieces, as is still the case with the vast majority of crustaceans and insects. Now, the scorpions are so made up of separate joints throughout; whereas the spiders have almost all the parts of their body welded together into two single masses, the breast and the abdomen, while only the legs are divided into well-marked segments. This difference in composition is due to the fact that in the modern spiders the various rings or pieces composing the body and breast of the ancestral type (like those which still make up the tail of a lobster) have coalesced into a couple of large round sacs—the so-called thorax and abdomen; while, in the modern scorpions, they still remain entirely distinct. Thus we see that the scorpions are the older, or, what comes to the same thing, the less advanced and developed branch of the family. For everywhere in nature the oldest families are the lowest, and the newest families are the best, the most intelligent, the biggest and the most dominant. In the parliament of species, it is the youngest sons of the newest families that sit as of right in the House of Peers; and man himself, the latest comer in the field, and the most recent in every way, takes his place, unchallenged, on the very woolsack.

Still, even at the present day, we have many intermediate links between scorpions and spiders, some of which bridge over the gap that divides them as perfectly as the most ardent evolutionist could wish. For example, there are the book-scorpions (so called from their studious habit of living among dusty old bookshelves), which are spiders as to the body, but scorpions as to the claws. These half-and-half creatures have lost their tails, and consequently can't sting; but they can give a sharp nip with their keen small claws, and being diminutive mites, they have also invented a very clever way of getting about from place to place

without any unnecessary expenditure of energy on their own part. They cling by their little nippers to the legs of flies, which are thus compelled to act, willy-nilly, as living hansoms or aerial navigators for their cunning little parasites. From the book-scorpions, again, a continuous line of more and more spiderlike creatures leads us on direct, through the so-called harvest-men and other allied intermediate forms, to types which would be spiders in shape and organs for all but the trained scientific eye, and finally to the true and undoubted spiders. Indeed, the outsider always imagines that the great difficulty of the evolutionist is the constant intervention, in his branching series of life, of 'missing links.' The man of science knows the exact opposite. His real difficulty in classification lies rather in the impossibility of drawing lines—of finding any effectual point of demarcation between class and class, or between species and species. Everything seems to him to glide into everything else by such imperceptible gradations that the task of setting up apparent barriers between them becomes at last positively tedious in its futility. Whenever you begin to examine any large group of animals or plants over a wide area, you find they merge into one another so gradually and so provokingly that you get to think in the end nothing is anything in particular, and everything is something else extremely like it.

A familiar human example will make this general muddiness and uncertainty of nature realisable to everyone. If we see a negro in the streets of London we immediately recognise the broad difference that marks him off from the common mass of white men by whom he is surrounded. But that, of course, is only because we take an individual instance. We say quite dogmatically: 'This man is black, thick-lipped, flat-nosed; I call him a negro: these other men are white, thin-lipped, sharp-nosed; I call them Europeans.' Quite so; that is true, relatively to the small area and restricted number of cases you have then and there examined. But, now, suppose you go on to the Soudan—a rather difficult thing to manage just at present, Mr. Cook's through bookings to Khartoum being temporarily suspended—and start from thence down the Nile through Nubia to Alexandria. At first on your way you would see few but thoroughly negroid faces—black skins, thick lips, flat noses, and so forth, according to sample. As you moved northward into Egypt, however, you would soon begin to find that, while the skin remained as black or nearly as black as ever, the features were tending slowly on the

average to Europeanise. Yet there would be nowhere a spot where you could say definitely: 'Here I leave behind me the Nubian type and arrive at the Egyptian;' never even could you pick out three or four men quite certainly from a group on some riverside wharf, overshadowed by doum-palms, and say on the evidence of skin and features alone, 'These men are Soudanese, and the remainder are Nubians.' Then, if you went on still through Sinai and Palestine—the regular Eastern tour—you would find at each step the tints getting lighter and the faces more Semitic. Passing further through Constantinople, Athens, South Italy, you would observe at each change a lighter complexion and more European style; till at last, as you crossed Provence and approached Central France, you would arrive pretty well at the familiar English type of face and feature.

Now the thorough-going collector would do better than that. Disregarding the petty restrictions of Governments and game laws, he would shoot and preserve in spirits of wine a number of illustrative specimens as he went, selecting them for the posthumous honours of his museum on the evolutionary principle of letting each type glide as easily and imperceptibly as possible into its next neighbour. A collection of human specimens made on this enlightened and unprejudiced principle would exhibit an unbroken series of intermediate forms between negro and Englishman. Instead of being troubled with 'missing links'—those exploded bugbears—we should actually have a perfect plethora of connecting links of every sort with which to construct a continuous chain from the coal-black negro to the fair-haired European. And this is no fancy picture; it is what was actually done by Mr. Seeböhm between Japan and England—not, to be sure, in the case of the human species, which is protected all the year round by a very strict and prohibitive 'close season,' but in that of certain small tomtits and buntings, which glide from variety to variety and from species to species, in Japan, Siberia, and Europe, with most perplexing continuity. So do also the types of mankind in the same area, beginning with the true unadulterated Mongoloid, as exemplified in the person of our cheery friend the Jap; passing on through the Siberian tribes, the Lapps, and the Finns; and ending at last with the genuine Russ, who varies, as I have noticed, from the veriest broad-faced Tartar type to the purest and most refined European cast of features and expression. I will venture to add (though I am leaving the poor

scorpions meanwhile long outside in the cold) that, for my own part, I have botanised and beast-hunted for many years in various parts of the world, and it is now my deliberate conviction that there exists in nature no such thing as a well-defined and absolute species, when you come to examine large areas together. Species are only convenient bundles for lumping things into groups for practical purposes, but they possess no natural or scientific validity. In Europe, we know very well what we mean by the words 'horse' and 'donkey.' But the distinction is a convenient commercial one alone, not a natural demarcation. In Central Asia and South Africa there are groups of connecting varieties which glide so imperceptibly from the Arab to the ass that not even the committee of the Jockey Club itself—I appeal, you will observe, outright to the highest conceivable authority—could decide on any rational ground where equinity ended and asininity began. But this is a parenthesis.

The true scorpions, then, to return from our digression, may be most conveniently distinguished from their stingless cousins the spiders and quasi-spiders by their possession of a tail. It is this tail, too, of course, that has given them all their celebrity in history and in proverbial philosophy. For the sting is in the tail; and where would the scorpion be as a literary property without his sting? He would be no more remarkable than all the other practically anonymous arachnid animals which can boast of nothing but a scientific Latin name. For myself, I'd just as lief go absolutely nameless as be ushered into a drawing-room by Mr. Jeames as a specimen of *Homo sapiens*, Linnæus.

The true scorpions, for their own part, though fairly numerous in species, stick all pretty close to one ancestral pattern. It is the pattern they had invented as long ago as the days of the coal-measures. It suits their purpose admirably, and therefore they have never seen reason to alter it since save in unimportant details. They have all a broad head, a body of seven rings, and a tail of five pieces, ending in a very swollen bulb or round segment, which is the seat of the poison-gland or actual sting-factory. In front, near the face, are a pair of jointed nippers, in appearance and use exactly like the big front claws of a lobster, so that large specimens present at first sight a singularly fallacious lobsterlike aspect. Indeed, Mr. Janson, the well-known dealer in strange beasts near the British Museum, quite recently sent me a very noble specimen of the big West African kind which rejoices in the

significant name of *Androctonus*, or the man-slayer, whose nippers would have afforded a good mouthful of scorpion-flesh to any inquiring mind anxious to investigate the creature from the culinary standpoint. This monster measured fully six inches from head to sting, and looked capable of breaking every law in the decalogue. I have seen lobsters no bigger exposed for sale at London fishmongers'.

The eight legs with which the creature walks, or rather scuffles along, for his gait is ungraceful, come behind the nippers. These last are used for catching and holding the prey alone. In the evening, when all is quiet, then sally forth these sons of Belial, flown with insolence and bane. They creep slowly and noiselessly from behind, like eight-legged garroters, upon the grubs, moths, and flies which constitute their prey; and as they do so, they cock up their flexible tail over the back of their body, very much after the fashion rendered familiar to us all by the attitude of that common English beetle, the devil's coach-horse. By this manœuvre, the scorpion manages to get his sting nearly as far forward as the back of his head, and to bring it into position for killing his expected booty. When the prey is fairly reached, he seizes it by the aid of his great claws, holds it fast in his grip, and quickly stings it to death by an injection of poison.

The sting itself is an interesting object for examination, but only when severed from the animal which originally possessed it. *In situ*, and during life, it had best be carefully avoided. It consists of a round swollen joint, containing two glands, both of which alike secrete the poisonous liquid. It ends in a sharp-pointed hook, sufficiently keen to pierce the skin even of considerable animals like sheep and antelopes. Sharp as it is, however, the end is doubly perforated, a separate duct conveying the poison from each of the glands to the point as if on purpose, so that if one failed, the other might succeed in killing its quarry. So beautifully does nature provide—but there! I forget; perhaps I am looking at the matter a little too exclusively from the point of view of the scorpion.

In their domestic life, I regret to say, our present subjects do not set a good example for the imitation of humanity. We may 'go to the ant' for advice, but not so to the scorpion. Birds in their little nests agree; scorpions differ. Nay, more, if you put two of them together under a single stone, they set to work at once to fight out their differences, and the victor usually proceeds

to kill and eat his vanquished opponent. Indeed, they are extraordinarily solitary animals. During many years of scorpion-hunting, I never remember to have seen two individuals living together in amity; and even their more tender relations are tainted at times with the unamiable habit of cannibalism. The males are decidedly smaller than their mates, whom they approach accordingly with the utmost caution. If the fair innamorata doesn't like the looks of her advancing suitor, she settles the question offhand by making a murderous spring at him, catching him in her claws, stinging him to death, and making a hearty meal off him. This is scarcely loverlike. On the other hand, if a dubious wife, the female scorpion is a devoted mother. She hatches her eggs in her own oviduct, brings forth her young alive (unlike her relations the spiders), and carries them about on her back, to the number of fifty, during their innocent childhood, till they are of an age to shift for themselves in the struggle for existence.

Scorpions do *not* sting themselves to death with their own tails when surrounded with fire. That silly and, on the very face of it, improbable fable has been invented by savages, and repeated by people who ought to know better, solely on the strength of the curious way the creatures cock up their tails when attacked, in the proper attitude for stinging. Some years ago, however, a so-called 'man of science,' who appears to have inherited his methods of investigation from a Red Indian ancestry, subjected several hundreds of these poor helpless brutes to most unnecessary torture, for no other purpose on earth than to establish the truth of this negative result, which sounds to me like a foregone conclusion. He burnt the unhappy animals with fire and acids, he roasted them alive on hot stone, he scalded them with boiling oil, he lavished upon them every form and variety of torment that a diseased mediæval imagination could suggest; but in the end he found no ingenuity of the inquisitor could make the constant scorpion take refuge in suicide. I merely mention this fact here, very much against the grain, in the hope that it may save other helpless scorpions from needless torture at the hands of such amateur investigators.

Scorpions are mostly tropical animals, though two or three species get as far north as Southern Europe. The largest of these, whom I have seen as big as two inches long on Algerian hillsides, and who attains about the same length in Sicily and Greece, rarely grows bigger than three-quarters of an inch on the Riviera. The

other common European kind is much smaller and less virulent. He abounds at Mentone, if only you know where to look for him; and I have found him as far north as Meran, in the Tyrol. He is even said to extend beyond the Alps into Bavaria and South Germany; but in these things I speak, as our old friend Herodotus puts it, 'not of my own knowledge, but as the priests have told me.'

In any case, the malignity and venomousness of scorpions, I think, have been immensely overestimated. Most people who don't personally know the tropics have been prejudiced by the familiar and foolish stories of the officer who is just going to pull on his boots, when he finds a snake or a scorpion in them of such gigantic dimensions that the British Museum would gladly purchase it of him at a great price in golden sovereigns. Now, I don't say such things *never* happen; far be it from me to impugn the veracity of the united services and the entire body of Indian civilians. But I do say they are very rare and exceptional. As I write these words, in my own study in a Surrey village, a great blundering bumble-bee is flitting about the room with his hateful buzz, and considerably incommoding me. I can honestly say he has caused me more annoyance in five minutes than all the scorpions or venomous reptiles I have ever known have caused me in nearly half a century. And, indeed, I think the average danger from poisonous creatures in tropical countries is a trifle less than the average danger in England from wasps or hornets, and considerably less than the danger from bulls or oxen. I have known one man killed by a hornet in England, and many men killed by savage bulls; but I have never known of my own experience a case of a man killed by a snake or scorpion. The truth is, this is a prosaic world. There is very little in it of romantic adventure. If you want to find snakes or scorpions, you must go and look for them. They certainly aren't going to put themselves out by coming to look for *you*, in order to give you a chance of observing them easily. Scorpions swarm under the stones at Mentone; but the ordinary visitor to the hotels in the town never finds them out till the man to the manner born shows him where to look for them.

This is the manner of scientific scorpion-hunting. You go forth for the fray armed with a wide-mouthed bottle and a pair of pincers. You turn over every likely stone on the hillside till you find your quarry. He runs away at once, without endeavouring to show fight; for his sting is rather intended for killing his food,

like the spider's venom, than for offence and pitched battle, like the wasp's and hornet's. Then you seize him promptly with your pincers, before he has time to scuttle away down his open burrow, and transfer him at once to durance vile in the bottle. Once corked and secured, you take him home at leisure, and kill him painlessly by asphyxiation in the ordinary fashion. If he is required for dissection, you preserve him whole in spirits of wine; but if only his outer form or skeleton is wanted for a museum, your best way is to lay him out entire on an ant's nest, especially if it belongs to one of the large and very carnivorous species. In a few days, the ants will have cleaned out every morsel of meat there is in that creature's carcase, and left only the dry skin for inclusion in your collection.

And now, I think, enough has been said concerning scorpions.

THE MAN WITH NO VOICE.

I.

WHEN the New Ebenezer Chapel was founded in a little front parlour in a back street of Market Mumborough, John Wicks was one of the first men to become a member of it. He went into it heart and soul; he was not satisfied to be only one of the congregation; even going round with a plate and helping to take collections did not satisfy him. He founded a Band of Hope, and devoted a lot of his savings towards giving it an annual excursion. He inaugurated a building fund with the object of erecting a real chapel, and the fund grew and the chapel grew till in due course the little parlour was abandoned in favour of the new and statelier edifice. An organ was out of the question; you can't have everything at once; but somebody presented a harmonium, then John organised a powerful choir, and courageously put himself at the head of it and led it.

But it did not follow him. It could not. He sung so persistently out of time and tune that it could do nothing but sing out independently of him and hope for the best. For though, in the ordinary meaning of the word, John had the voices of three men combined in one, in a musical sense he had no voice at all. His only idea on the subject appeared to be that, as leader, it was his duty to keep at least one note ahead of the choir. The choir never seemed to understand this point, and would get up speed and hurry on in a determined effort to overtake him; he would hear it coming, increase his own speed accordingly, and the result was a sort of neck-and-neck race till the choir caught him up and passed him, and left him a word and a half behind at the end of the verse. Then he would try to make up for it in the next verse; he would start first, the others would come hurrying after, and, finding they could not catch him up, would finish with a rush and a skip, so as to come harmoniously in on the last note with him all together. Then they would have to wait for the congregation and the harmonium before they could go on again.

It was not a high-class style of singing, but as the congregation among themselves used also to sing very much on the 'go-as-you-please' principle, none of them made any serious complaint. The minister himself was not a musical critic, and though it did occur to him now and then that something was the matter with

the harmony, he put it down to the fact that he had 'no ear,' and said nothing about it. The only person who really grumbled was the gentleman who played the harmonium. And he was said to be jealous because John's voice was so powerful and the choir so large and loud, that he not only could not hear himself play, but the congregation could not hear him either. That put him out more than the singing, and he made so many complaints about it that, at last, on the minister's suggestion, John reduced the choir.

Then there was not sufficient volume of sound in the reduced choir to tone down the singing of John Wicks. His voice could be heard above all the other voices, and there was nothing left to cope with it on anything like equal terms except the harmonium. And between John's voice and that instrument there began a great struggle for pre-eminence. Every Sunday, morning and evening, it was the same. The hymn would be given out, the harmonium would have a prelude all to itself, then John's voice would rise up and roar out triumphantly. But the harmonium was after it at once, hand over hand, so to speak, caught it, lost it, caught it again, grappled with it, wrestled, writhed, and strove with it desperately, and sometimes the one was temporarily successful, and sometimes the other, but no permanent victory could be achieved by either.

This state of things could not always continue, but it lasted for some six or seven years. Then Mr. George B. Graff moved into the little town and joined the congregation. He had come from London, and was a smart, energetic man who boasted that he knew good singing when he heard it, and that he had led the choir of his chapel in London. And when he heard John sing he had no hesitation in saying it was the worst sample of vocal melody that had ever come beneath his notice.

'It's the first time I've heard him, Mr. Miffin,' he said to the gentleman who played the harmonium, as they walked away after service, 'but, sir, my nerves are so sensitive that they are harrowed and torn by the sound.'

'Well, sir,' replied Mr. Miffin, glad to have found a partisan, 'I have been trying to stop it for some years past. I have spoken to Mr. Wicks, but he seems to think I am actuated by personal spite against himself. I have spoken to Mr. Nutt, our good pastor, but he—well, you see, Mr. Wicks was almost the first to join the chapel, he has taken a lot of interest in it, and done a lot of work for it, and is very popular. He started the choir—'

'But that's no reason why he should lead it when he's got no voice to lead it with. No voice, sir. None at all,' said Mr. Graff, impatiently. 'I've heard all the best singers in the world, male and female, and such singing as his, sir, kills me—destroys me!'

'I know what it is, sir. You have a keen ear for music, like myself,' said Mr. Miffin, 'and I have suffered as——'

'Well, now, look here, we'll put a stop to it,' interrupted Mr. Graff. 'We must have that choir reformed, sir; half of it can't sing. And it must have a new leader who——'

'Why not lead it yourself, Mr. Graff, sir? I'm sure it couldn't have a better leader than yourself.'

'Well, I would do it, sir,' replied Mr. Graff, 'if they could not find a better man.'

'Better? Where are they going to find one so good?'

'Well, anyhow,' cried Mr. Graff as they parted, 'you call for me to-morrow evening, and we'll go and see Mr. Nutt about it. Good night.— Uncommonly intelligent man, that Miffin is,' he added to his wife, after Mr. Miffin had left them; 'knows vocal talent when he hears it. Keen hearing. He picked out my voice right across the building, my dear. My singing struck him, and he looked round to see who it was. Very clever man he seems to be.'

He went with Mr. Miffin on the following evening to see Mr. Nutt, who received them affably in his neat little study.

'Sit down, gentlemen,' he said, beaming upon them through his spectacles, 'I hardly expected visitors this evening. Sit down.'

'No, sir,' replied Mr. Graff, solemnly, 'but Mr. Miffin and I thought we'd come and see you about a little matter connected with the choir.'

'Yes?' said Mr. Nutt inquiringly. 'Nothing wrong, I hope?'

He had a horror of anything going wrong. He was an easy-going, quiet, good man, whose chief fault was an over-anxiety to please everybody. He was gentle and super-sensitive to such an extent that he would put up with almost anything sooner than hurt anyone's feelings with unpalatable truths it was not positively his duty to utter.

'Well, it *is* something wrong,' answered Mr. Graff.

'Yes?' said Mr. Nutt again, inquiringly.

'Yes. It's about Mr. Wicks's singing, sir,' pursued Mr. Graff, decisively, 'and that's all wrong.'

'Wrong?' said Mr. Nutt, uneasily.

'Yes. Isn't a right note in it, sir. What do you say, Mr. Miffin?' cried Mr. Graff.

Mr. Miffin said he was afraid it was very bad.

'Bad!' ejaculated Mr. Graff, 'I never heard anything worse. Never. It is simply shocking. I don't like to say it's impious, but it is very nearly.'

'Mr. Wicks is a very good man,' remarked the minister, feebly.

'Oh, it isn't him. If his voice was as good as he is—but it isn't. He's got no voice. None at all, sir. He can't sing, and he ought not to be allowed to lead that choir any longer. It—well, it's disgraceful.'

'He's fond of his work. He does his best, Mr. Graff. And he is really an earnest, good man,' said the minister.

'So are we all, I hope, sir,' cried Mr. Graff, rather indignantly. 'But it does not follow that we are all capable of leading choirs. He's a good man, but has he got a good voice?'

'There are some things that are better than a good voice,' observed the minister, vaguely.

'The thing is, does he understand music?' continued Mr. Graff.

'No!' ejaculated Mr. Miffin emphatically.

'No,' echoed Mr. Graff, 'he's got no voice and no ear. He can't sing himself, and he has got people in the choir who can't sing either. They shout, sir; they don't sing. Now, sir, we want to get as near perfection as we can, of course, and we came to suggest that you should see Mr. Wicks and explain to him in your own perfectly friendly manner that he ought to resign. We give him all credit for starting the choir, but he shouldn't try to do more than he *can* do.'

The minister still vaguely and uneasily put forward the argument that Mr. Wicks was doing his best, and was really a very good man, but he felt that he was beaten; he was weak and anxious to please, and yielded at last to the determined persuasions of his visitors, only asking, resignedly, who would take Mr. Wicks's place if he resigned.

'The best man we can find, sir,' said Mr. Graff, promptly.

'Which is Mr. Graff himself, sir,' declared Mr. Miffin; 'he is a clever vocalist, a capable choirmaster—a——'

Mr. Graff demurred. He said 'No, no;' but he meant yes, yes, and Mr. Miffin knew what he meant, and would not listen to a refusal; he artfully contrived to draw the minister into the

discussion, and, out of mere politeness and a nervous desire to be agreeable, Mr. Nutt hesitatingly uttered an approval of Mr. Miffin's suggestion.

'That settles it then,' cried Mr. Graff. 'If you wish it, sir, of course I will undertake the post. And you may rely upon it I shall do my best.'

After they were gone Mr. Nutt reproached himself with his own weakness. He had not desired the alteration, and yet somehow he had not only consented to ask John Wicks to resign, but had been led into authorising Mr. Graff to take John's place. He lay awake at night worrying over it, but he had not courage to undo what he had done, and for two days he had not even courage to go and explain matters to John; but on the third day he felt he must put it off no longer, for that evening the choir met for practice. So he called at John's shop in the afternoon, and found him alone behind the counter, gloomily weighing up moist sugar into pound packets; his usual genial buoyancy seemed to have quite deserted him, and he shook hands with the minister without saying a word.

'Well, John,' said Mr. Nutt, nervously, 'you—you don't seem quite up to the mark, eh? How—er—how is your mother?'

'I met Mr. Miffin yesterday, sir,' John burst forth impetuously, 'and he said you wanted me to resign and—and—' he could hardly control his voice, and there were foolish tears coming into his big, round eyes, 'and he said you wanted Mr. Graff to lead the choir. I've led it, sir, these seven years. You never told me you didn't like my style, sir.'

'No, John. No, my dear John,' faltered the minister. 'You see—'

'He said you thought I'd got no voice, sir—'

'I never said so, John—'

'What's the matter with my singing, sir?'

'Nothing, John. Very good singing, but I—you see—they—'

'I thought you liked my singing, sir?'

'I do, John. I do, indeed. I should miss your voice in the place more than anyone's. You sing with all your heart, and I hope you'll go on singing still, if not in the choir, why, then—'

'No, I feel as if I couldn't, sir. I feel, somehow, that if my voice is not good enough for one part of the chapel, it isn't good enough for another. I feel it—it's a sort of disgrace like, sir. I shall still come, but I—I can't sing.'

He looked so utterly miserable, with the tears standing in his wide, troubled eyes, and his lips quivering, that the minister took his hand and said what he could to comfort him. He made him fully understand that it was not his wish that he should leave the choir, but the wish of those musical experts, Mr. Graff and Mr. Miffin, whose opinions in such matters could hardly be disputed. At the same time he threw out indefinite hints that the alteration might be only temporary, and that before long John would be back in his old place leading the choir again. Then he tried to turn the conversation on to general topics, but could not do it successfully, and presently invented an excuse to hurry away, and hurried away full of self-reproaches and regret.

II.

And next Sunday the new order of things came into operation. Mr. Graff had a well-trained voice, and certainly led the choir as it never had been led before. John sat amongst the congregation with his mother, but he did not sing. How could he after what had been said of him? He was ashamed of his own voice, and stood there silent and dejected. The older members of the congregation and many of the younger sympathised with him, and felt that he had been unfairly dealt with, and did not hesitate to say so. Some of them during the next few days waylaid the minister, and spoke to him about it in such reproachful terms that he was reduced to making rambling excuses for his own share in the transaction, and vague promises that he would see what could be done. He was a conscientious man, but weak and easily influenced, and he had to suffer on all hands for his weakness. He felt that he had acted wrongly, but did not see how he was to put matters right again now without a lot more unpleasantness. Every Sunday, morning and evening, from his pulpit he could see John there in his pew, looking hurt and downcast, joining in none of the hymns, and taking but a listless interest in the whole service. He missed John's voice too, genuinely missed it, and felt and said that since he had grown mute the singing had lost all its inspiring heartiness, and the choir had become merely a piece of mechanism.

For you see John did not understand a note of music, so he and his choir used to sing only the old tunes that everybody knew, and that all the congregation could join in singing with immense

gusto and enjoyment. But Mr. Graff set himself to improve all this. He reorganised the choir, but still he could not get more than two or three people into it who were able to read music. So he had a choir meeting three times a week for practice, at which he would sing and Mr. Miffin would play, and the choir would follow them as best it could, and by slow perseverance master new tunes. But when the new tunes came to be sung on Sundays of course the congregation could not join in singing them, and every now and then even the choir would get the tune into such a hopeless tangle that it broke down, and left Mr. Graff to finish a verse by himself as if he were performing a solo with harmonium accompaniment.

John had such a paternal interest in the choir that far from feeling any malicious joy in his successor's difficulties, the unsatisfactory state of affairs was honestly a great trouble to him. But what could he do? They would not let him do anything. All the congregation knew how it fretted and worried him; he was not proud enough to cloak his humiliation in offended silence, but gave voice to his feelings on every opportunity, sure always of the sympathy of his hearers. But all his old ardour had been severely checked; he did not take such hearty pleasure in the Sunday services as he had taken formerly, and by degrees became less regular in his attendance until he left off coming of an evening almost entirely.

One Sunday evening when he was not there, just as the last hymn was being sung, a man came hurrying along the aisle into the choir, checked Mr. Graff, brought him suddenly down from a top note, and whispered hastily in his ear. The choir went on singing, the harmonium went on playing, but Mr. Graff dropped his hymnbook, and, without waiting for his hat, rushed with a white, terror-stricken face down the aisle, and out of the chapel like a man suddenly gone mad. Mrs. Graff started from her pew and called to him as he passed, but he was gone as if he had not heard her.

Once in the street, Mr. Graff redoubled his speed, and ran as he never ran in his life before. The messenger could scarcely keep pace with him.

'Have—they—got—my—little—girl—out?' Mr. Graff panted, hoarsely.

'Dunno,' responded the messenger. And they ran on without another word. They overtook and passed others running in the same direction; soon they could hear a confused uproar on ahead

of them, and suddenly turning a corner they came full in view of Mr. Graff's house, which was nothing now, so far as they could see, but a black mass of wreathing smoke, with a lurid heart of fire.

In a moment Mr. Graff was pushing through the crowd that was standing strangely silent, gazing up earnestly into the smoke. He saw at a glance an hysterical servant girl standing amongst them, wringing her hands and looking up with the rest, and grasped her arm and shook her roughly.

'Effie? Where is Effie?' he shouted wildly.

'Oh, sir!' cried the girl, in helpless terror, 'I'd put her to bed upstairs, and——'

He was gone; he had his latch-key out of his pocket, and dashed wildly under that choking canopy of smoke, and up the few steps to the front door. But at the same instant an inarticulate roar burst from the entire crowd, three or four men were after him, and seized him and dragged him back by main force, shouting frantically: 'She's here! He's got her! Hurrah! Look! There he is! Hurrah!'

The whole crowd was simply crying and sobbing and shouting all together. And looking up, dazed and bewildered, Mr. Graff saw dimly the figure of a man coming down a ladder through that blinding, suffocating smoke, with a little child in his arms. Before the man had reached the ground Mr. Graff broke from the men who held him, rushed forward, snatched the child into his own arms, and held it close as if he could not assure himself even yet that it was safe. But the crowd swarmed down upon the rescuer, cheering and making frantic grabs at him. If he had had a hundred hands every man in that crowd would have shaken every one of them twice over. They would not let him get away; they pressed about him, and would not leave him alone. His face was all blackened with the smoke, he had been singed and scorched by the fire, but they knew him, they knew him in spite of it all, God bless him! It was John Wicks. And the crowd rolled on before him, as he went away, and beside him and after him, cheering and grasping his hand until at last he escaped into his own house, and shut the door on them. Then they ran back to the scene of the fire, and found the fire-engine hard at work and the fire-escape just arriving.

Early next morning, soon after John had opened his shop, Mr. Graff came quietly in, looking nervous and depressed. His old, blatant self-assurance seemed to have quite failed him; he shook

John's hand warmly, and seemed as if he wanted to say something, and did not know how to begin. John, just to break the awkward silence, said how sorry he was for the great loss Mr. Graff must have suffered by the fire, when Mr. Graff interrupted him :

'All insured,' he said, with an effort; 'don't matter a bit. 'Tisn't that, sir. Mr. Wicks,' he continued brokenly, after a momentary pause, 'she—she—is our—only one, sir, and——'

He gave it up. He dropped his arms on the counter, and hid his face in them, and sobbed in a way that was pitiful to hear. John did not know what to do. He ran his fingers through his singed hair, and stammered awkwardly that it was all right and didn't matter, when suddenly Mr. Graff appeared to conquer himself. He stood upright, cleared his throat vigorously, began to say something, stopped, leaned across the counter, and grasping John's hand again, huskily ejaculated, 'God bless you!' and turned at once and bolted out of the shop. Two days after he came in again; but this time he had got himself well under control. He spoke with his old self-confidence, his old air of imperative decision. And having thanked John in easy, conventional phrases for saving his little one's life, he continued :

'And now I'm going to ask you to do me a favour, Mr. Wicks. I am too much upset to attend to the choir at present; in fact, between ourselves, I can make nothing of it. Knew I couldn't before I started, but—well, they would have me try it; and I've tried it and failed, sir, and I know of no one so capable of leading it as yourself. You led it successfully before—will you, as a personal kindness to me, take it on again?'

'But I thought,' said John innocently, taken pleasantly by surprise, 'you thought I had—I had no voice, sir?'

'Me? Not me. Oh, no!' cried Mr. Graff, emphatically, 'I believe, now you mention it, Mr. Miffin seemed to have some such impression; but Mr. Miffin is no judge, sir. He does not understand the voice. His forte is the harmonium. You mustn't mind what he says. They wanted you to retire temporarily, and let me try, and I've tried and—and made a mess of it, and I've done with it. There! So if you won't take it up again the chapel will have to do without a choir, that's all.'

In this way John's former belief in his own voice was aroused, and began to reassert itself within him. It was nice to feel that they couldn't get on without him, and wanted him back, and he was the last man in the world to dream of avenging the slight

that had been put upon him by refusing to go. And when Mr. Graff had been to the minister, and the minister came and pressed John, with genuine and delighted earnestness, to resume his old duties, John yielded gladly, only feeling somehow just a little sorry that Mr. Graff had failed, until he was assured that Mr. Graff was in no wise sorry for himself.

He led the choir on the very next Sunday, and the whole congregation heartily and with all its might joined in the old, familiar hymns again, and sang out of time and out of tune with him, and enjoyed the singing and the whole service to the utmost. Everybody seemed glad to have him back again—everybody but Mr. Miffin, who complained about it as he was walking towards home with Mr. and Mrs. Graff, and was still complaining about it when the minister overtook them.

‘I was saying, sir, how I enjoyed the singing this morning,’ cried Mr. Graff, heartily.

‘Yes,’ assented Mr. Nutt, with equal warmth, ‘it did me good. It was splendid. How heartily everyone joined in! That is as it should be.’

‘Yes,’ cried Mr. Graff, generously, ‘there’s no doubt Mr. Wicks is the man for the place. You made a mistake, sir, in putting him out of it. His singing is infectious. It makes everyone else sing. There’s such a hearty sound in it; it warms you only to hear it. He’s a fine fellow. Powerful voice! Little untrained, but powerful.’

Mr. Miffin didn’t know what to make of it. He could not understand why Mr. Graff should desert him in this manner. That his gratitude to John should deafen him to the horrors of John’s voice was unreasonable, scarcely even Christian, and to pretend that the change of opinion was wrought by real conviction and not by gratitude was a barefaced wickedness. Mr. Miffin was put out.

‘His voice is the same as it always was,’ he declared; ‘there’s no tune in it——’

‘Yes, there is,’ interrupted Mr. Graff, unblushingly. ‘What if there isn’t? He’s a good fellow. He’s got a good heart, even if he hasn’t got a good voice.’

‘Aha!’ chuckled the minister, glancing at Mr. Graff with a sidelong smile, ‘and after all there are some good things that are better than a good voice.’

‘That’s it. There are,’ declared Mr. Graff, ‘and he’s got them. He’s got ’em all, sir, and he sings with every one of them, and—that’s what makes his singing good. God bless him!’

